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IT HAPPENED BY "MAGIC":
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FALLING IN LOVE

By

Jacqueline L. Gibson

B. A., University of Montana, Missoula, 1975

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirement

for the degree of

Master of Arts

University of Montana

1988

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It Happened by "Magic": A Qualitative Study of Falling
in Love

Director: William W. Wilmot *W. Wilmot*

This study examined the perceptions of lovers about their love experience, their feelings, and the manner in which they communicate love to the beloved. The subject population consisted of seven females and seven males who considered themselves to be "in love." One half of the subjects were heterosexual, the other half homosexual. Data were collected through structured intensive interviews, and the responses qualitatively analyzed using the constant comparative method.

Subjects confirmed many of the elements and dimensions of love identified by other writers and researchers, and often described their experience by labeling relational constructs, such as "commitment" or "reciprocity." Although respondents often found it difficult to put their falling-in-love experience into words, they used vivid, metaphoric language in their attempts. They described distinctive feelings, physiological responses, and behaviors characteristic of their love relationship. Respondents admirably accounted for their communication behaviors in the relationship, and told of the effort expended in their efforts to communicate well with the beloved.

Few distinctive sex preference differences arose, except for the problems homosexuals encountered with lack of familial and social support for their relationship. A few gender differences were noticed, notably that females were more talkative and more frequently than males used the word "magic" to describe their experience.

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To my parents Inky and Jack Gibson, who always believed in me -- although they may not have believed I'd ever finish

this thesis! -- great thanks, and a hope that they'll get pleasure in seeing their daughter's name in print.

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I'm still glad I wrote a thesis!

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REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Love happens. It is a miracle that happens by grace. We have no control over it. It happens. It comes, it lights our lives, and very often it departs. We can never make it happen nor make it stay.

de Castillejo 1973, p 116

Love is a grave mental disease.
Plato

. .the fact of the matter is that love is a great mystery that is not understood.

Sanford 1980, p. 101

The state of falling in love is one of the most remarkable in human experience, yet there seem to be as many kinds of love as there are relationships, as many definitions of love as there are thinkers or writers on the subject. The romantic idea of love which is exemplified by the "falling in love" experience seems to be based in the Middle Ages, yet has changed significantly since that time, even in the Western world, especially in terms of our culture's basis of marriage on love. Additionally, the psychological and scientific study of love is quite new, done almost entirely since 1971, and little is known about the development of love in our species (Cunningham and Antill 1981, pp. 27-28).

In the literature, the falling in love experience is called variously "passionate love," "romantic love," and "limerance." For the most part, we will use the term "romantic love" in this study. Zick Rubin states simply that romantic love is the sort of love that exists between unmarried, opposite sex partners, as distinguished from the love between children and parents, close friends, and humans and God (Z. Rubin 1973, p. 212). Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz defines it as "an intense emotional state that one person experiences in relation to another," and that the beloved seems to be the cause of this state (Liebowitz, 1984, p. 89).

Elaine Hatfield has said that passionate love is the same as infatuation, an intensely emotional state associated with tender and sexual feelings, elation and pain, anxiety and relief (Hatfield in Fischer & Stricker 1982, p. 268). Other definitions include: "a state of intense longing for union with another, a state of profound physical arousal," of which reciprocated love (union with another) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy, and unrequited love (separation) with emptiness, anxiety or despair (Hatfield & Walster 1978, p. 9); a wildly emotional state, a confusion of feelings: tenderness and sexuality, elation and pain, anxiety and relief, altruism and jealousy (Walster & Walster 1978, p. 2); "a state of intense absorption in another"

(Berscheid & Walster 1978, p. 151); "a distinct form of interpersonal attraction that occurs between opposite-sex partners under specifiable social conditions" (Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1971, p. 1); "a strong emotional attachment, a cathexis, between adolescents or adults of opposite sexes, with at least the components of sexual desire and tenderness (Goode 1959, p. 41); and a state of mad, passionate, all-consuming love (Schrunk 1973, p. 68).

Kinget identifies three components of romantic love: (1) biological: an erotic attraction; (2) sociological: varying widely in time and space; and (3) phenomenological: an intense state of erotic-representational involvement, which thrives on imagination, longing, obstacles to gratification, and which declines upon regular, assured genital gratification; "therefore, full-fledged romantic love is unavoidably transient" (Kinget 1979, p. 251).

In coining a special word for this state, "limerance," Tennov concluded from looking at the views of Freud, Ellis, Reik, Fromm and May, that

The general view seemed to be that romantic love is mysterious, mystical, even sacred, and not capable, apparently, of being subjected to the cool gaze of scientific inquiry (Tennov 1979, p. 5).

Tennov thoroughly describes limerance as the magic or

madness of love, the aching obsession with love, the condition of cognitive obsession with spending time desiring a love, of being in love with love (Tennov 1979, p. 33).

McWhirter and Mattison (1984) redefined "limerance" as a functional state, to describe the "head-over-heels" in-love condition.

Limerance is a respectable stepping stone on the path of relationship building. It is not just an infatuation, mere puppy love, or humorously going through a phase. These persons are not to be dismissed as simply love-sick. They are developing deep feelings that will influence the quality and tone of the relationship for as long as it lasts - and that may be a lifetime (McWhirter and Mattison, 1984, p. 27)

In the literature, definitions are not entirely clear, there is no essential agreement, except for the fact that most of us recognize love when we "fall into" it. It seems to be only the lover who can determine if the state is really love, whether it is reciprocated or not.

Sometimes 'lovers' are those who long for their partners and for complete fulfillment. Sometimes 'lovers' are those who are ecstatic at finally having attained their partner's love and, momentarily, complete fulfillment (Berscheid & Walster 1978, p. 151).

The belief that love can be a serious topic of scientific inquiry is fairly new, but strongly supported by a small group of persons active in research. Dion and

Dion say:

Since romantic love is often assumed to be the deepest and most intense form of attraction linking partners, it is perhaps not unreasonable to expect that a measure of romantic love, such as Rubin's love scale, is a stronger predictor of relevant behaviour toward one's partner than a presumably milder form of affect, such as liking, or merely the extent of familiarity between persons. . . if the 'power' of love in influencing actual behaviour toward one's partner (other than simply self-reports) is not greater than liking, this perhaps should give us pause and suggest the need for seriously reconsidering our extant measures of romantic love (Dion & Dion 1979, p. 220).

This review of the literature of romantic love will focus on the dimensions and elements of romantic love, the myths surrounding romantic love in this culture, the proposition that certain conditions are necessary for an individual's falling in love, the feelings associated with falling in love, the behavioral correlates of romantic love, and various recent typologies of love.

DIMENSIONS AND ELEMENTS OF ROMANTIC LOVE

Romantic love is a very different experience from any other kind of love -- parental, filial, humanistic, philanthropic, religious, or even of the companionate sort that develops over time in a long-term love relationship. It is not unusual, then, that we try to identify romantic love's characteristics and components.

It seems that every researcher has come up with her or

his own breakdown of what constitutes romantic love. The attempt here is to summarize and bring some order to that vast collection of individual thoughts about the composition of romantic love as a construct.

Kelley (1979) has laid out his perceived dimensions of interpersonal relations, which would apply in more specific terms to romantic relationships: (1) a power dimension, whether the power in the relationship is equal, unequal, or mutual in nature; (2) an activity or intensity dimension, the relationship characterized as intensive or superficial, active or inactive; (3) a caring or compatibility dimension, the relationship seen as cooperative/friendly or competitive/hostile, compatible or incompatible, harmonious or clashing; and last, (4) the emotional, pleasurable dimension. Each dimension can be seen as a continuum, with each relationship plotted on the continuum from one extreme to another. It seems that most romantic relationships might be described as mutual in power, intensive and active, caring and harmonious, and pleasurable and emotional (Kelley 1979, pp. 35-36).

Levinger (1977) defines a close relationship (of which romantic love relationships form one subset) as "frequent interaction between spatially near partners who share significant common goals, exchange personal disclosures and care deeply about one another" (Levinger 1977a, p.

138). He characterizes the dimensions of such relationships as threefold: (1) involvement, (2) commitment, and (3) symmetry (Levinger 1977b, p. 8). Levinger's "involvement" dimension appears similar to Kelley's "activity/intensity" dimension; his "symmetry" dimension specifies the type of power required for such a relationship. Levinger's "commitment" dimension seems an outgrowth of Kelley's "caring" and "pleasurable" dimensions. Owen (1984a) has also discovered through lovers' use of metaphor the importance of the "involvement" and "commitment" dimensions.

Alberoni (1983) specifies the structural characteristics (dimensions) of a love relationship in somewhat different terms. Alberoni defines at least five such dimensions: (1) the timelessness of the present moment (pp. 14, 33-34); (2) symmetrical power, absolute equality (pp. 55-57); (3) a state of communism, that is, each giving according to ability and receiving according to need (pp. 54-55); (4) the requirements of authenticity and truth (pp. 55-57); and (5) the condition of the expansion of the real, an intensification of sexuality, physicality, intellect, understanding and sincerity (pp. 11-12, 59-60); and finally, (6) happiness (pp 59-60).

Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz list eight dimensions of romantic love, which I would recast in the following manner: (1) a cluster of needs for affiliation and

dependency (called "attachment" by others); (2) a cluster of feelings of absorption and exclusiveness; (3) a cluster of emotions and cognitive processes involving physical attraction, passion and idealization of the beloved; and (4) a predisposition to help the beloved (Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 2).

More recently, Robert Sternberg's (1984) love studies affirm and add to the love dimensions work. Quoted by Daniel Goleman of the New York Times Sternberg addresses the power dimension: "The single most important variable in how satisfied partners are with the match is whether they love each other in roughly equal degrees, not the absolute amount of love they feel" (Goleman, 1984).

It appears, then, that the theorists have postulated some notions about the structure of romantic love, having in common the dimensions of (1) power, (2) involvement/commitment, (3) attachment, (4) intensity/intensification, and (5) happiness/caring. Further studies on these dimensions and their value in understanding the nature of love relationships should prove valuable.

Alberoni's description of the state of falling in love is that it is a radical, revolutionary new state of being. The lovers themselves are changed, not the outside world. The lovers think, feel, and judge in a radically different way (Alberoni 1983, pp. 59-60).

In every case, falling in love is always a meeting of two isolated individuals, each of whom carries in and with himself a system of relationships, wanting to retain some and restructure others. . . they seek absolute meeting of their individual natures, but at the same time an integration of the immediate circumstances in which they are involved. Not one or the other, but both of these things (Alberoni 1983, p. 48).

The love study conducted by Marston, Hecht and Robers looked at the irrationality of the falling in love experience and called it "one with an almost magic emancipatory capacity to transcend the very limitations of human existence" (Marston, Hecht, and Robers, 1986, p. 1).

Goodison, outlining the common "steps" in falling in love, describes Step 2 as that in which love changes the lover's reality. There is a general sensation of disorientation, and the "shifting world is permeated by terrible wanting" In Step 4, the experience of a new reality, connectedness, makes the world come alive, and "something in it tells us it could be a revolutionary force" (Goodison, 1983, pp. 49, 51).

Nearly all writers about love list a few to dozens of basic elements or components of romantic love, some of which they identify as distinguishing characteristics of romantic love, or the state of falling in love. These distinguishing characteristics are said to be:

(1) Lovers seem to 'recognize' each other.

. . when two people who are really prepared for love meet each other, it is very likely that they will in fact fall in love, that they will 'recognize' each other. . . the nascent state instantly creates recognition or understanding on a profound, intuitive level (Alberoni 1983, p. 62).

This recognition leads to the formation of the collective "we." One writer has said that true love is illuminated by a spark of recognition, a "magic click," an "Aha!" (Kellogg, 1988, p. 242).

(2) Lovers desire inseparability.

This quality, the desire for inseparability, colors the emotional, social and sexual behavior of the partners in love, and gives them their specifically 'romantic' hue (Orlinsky 1979, p. 210).

This "merging" or "blending" phenomenon occurs when two forces join together to create a new one and is characteristic of the early stages of a love relationship (McWhirter & Mattison, 1984, p. 23).

(3) Lovers are distinguished by a concept called "attachment," a construct well recognized and documented in relationship literature (Z. Rubin 1973, p. 213; Pam, Plutchik & Conte 1975, p. 83). Attachment has been called "the most salient aspect" of love relationships (Pam, Plutchik and Conte 1975, p. 88), and Liebowitz says that "romantic love requires attraction plus attachment"

(Liebowitz, 1984, p. 95).

Further complicating the dimension of attachment is another element often identified as that of dependency, or interdependence, or a conflicting urge of independence and merging with the beloved (Berscheid & Walster 1978, p. 164; Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 2; Goodison, 1983, pp. 62-63; Hatfield 1982, p. 271; Kelley 1979, pp 3-5; Kelley 1983, p. 277; Pam, Plutchik & Conte 1975, p. 83; Z. Rubin 1973, p. 213).

In addition to the above-mentioned distinguishing characteristics, other "elements" of romantic love have been repeatedly identified, some of which will be listed below in clusters of related elements.

Often mentioned by writers on romantic love is the element of uncertainty combined with frustration, often accompanied by a challenge to overcome obstacles (Berscheid & Walster 1978, pp. 170-175; Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz (1972, p. 3; Lasswell & Lobsenz 1980, pp. 53-55).

Truly characteristic of the experience of falling in love seems to be a state of internal conflict: conflicting desires for security and excitement, passion composed of pleasure and pain, the hope of fulfillment with the threat of loss (Berscheid & Walster 1978, pp. 155, 165-172; Goodison, 1983, p. 51; Hatfield 1982, p. 272).

The world of those in love is filled with fantasies --

fantasies of fulfillment, perfection, of idealization of the beloved. This is frequently listed as a basic element of the world of romantic love (Berscheid & Walster 1978, p. 153; Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 2; Greenfield 1965, pp. 363-364; Lasswell & Lobsenz 1980, pp 53-55; Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 276-277). Goodison is nearly the only dissenter in saying that romantic fantasies are common, but not central to the love experience.

They may be the preformed moulds which society offers us to pour ourselves into, but they are not its source. . . the central drive of falling in love seems to be more of a blood-and-guts affair. . . [Love's roots] lie deeper in the earth. The power it feeds on is not essentially romantic, but one that tears at the innards (Goodison, 1983, pp. 51-52).

The sexual aspect of being in love cannot be denied, and passion, arousal, sexuality, and physical attraction are all listed in various discussions of the elements of romantic love (Brain 1976, p. 222; Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 2; Hatfield 1982, p. 271; Hattis 1965, p. 28; Kelley 1983, pp. 276-277; Pam, Plutchik & Conte 1975, p. 893; Sternberg, 1984; Walster & Walster 1978, p. 16).

The desire for intimacy, liking as well as loving, affection, caring and tenderness, are all feelings listed as essential elements of romantic love (Douvan 1977, p. 17; Hattis 1965, p. 28; Kelley 1983, p. 277; Walster & Walster

1978, p. 16; Hatfield 1982, p. 271). We know from our mothers and grandmothers that people in love go "walking in the clouds," "looking at the world through rose-colored glasses," and generally living in a heightened world of euphoria, an element listed by Greenfield (1975, p. 367).

One of the carryovers of courtly love from the Middle Ages is the notion that romantic love is characterized by suffering through a desire for intimacy, for striving and yearning for the beloved (Z. Rubin 1973, pp 185-186; Walster & Walster 1978, p. 15; Lasswell & Lobsenz 1980, pp 53-55). This suffering is especially characteristic of those lovers called "limerant" (Tennov 1979, pp 23-24). In all the romantic stories we've heard -- Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde -- we recognize an element composed of indulgence in impulse and a nonconcern for social bounds or normative behaviors. Love, instead, surpasses all our social constraints (Douvan 1977, p. 17; Greenfield 1965, pp. 363-364; Walster & Walster 1978, p. 16).

Although "Elements of Romantic Love" is a large, loose category, it helps to introduce the kinds of ways writers and researchers have attempted to examine love relationships.

Falling in love, like every nascent state, is an exploration of the possible starting from the impossible; it is an attempt to impose the imaginary on existence. The greater the task, the longer the journey and the less likely the arrival. The

history of falling in love, then, amounts to the history of that journey and its hardships, the struggles endured, without an arrival or a happy landing (Alberoni 1983, p. 98).

One way to discover the larger journey of what-people-experience-when-they-fall-in-love is to examine the common beliefs and myths about love and how they shape our experiences.

MYTHS OF ROMANTIC LOVE

Falling in love is the condition we associate with what the writers and researchers call Romantic Love. Grown out of the medieval tradition of courtly love, romantic love still carries with it a bundle of myths and expectations, particularly the following: love is fated, uncontrollable, occurring at first sight, transcending all social bounds, and manifesting itself in turbulence, agony, and ecstasy. Love is the element that makes us whole, satisfies us completely; it lasts forever, and is characterized by never having to talk about the relationship.

Our phrase "falling in love" expresses the belief that love happens to us, we cannot control it, we "fall into" it, and it is a "natural occurrence, like a baby's first cry" (Schrank 1973, p. 66). We believe that if we have strong feelings of attraction, we are experiencing love (Powell 1974, pp. 46-47). That strong feeling, or group of feelings, is defined by us as "that old feeling" of

the song, that tells us this is the one, true love (Peck 1978, pp. 91-92).

Somehow, romantic love has come to be associated with a fatalistic outlook, and we believe there is only one true love for each of us to find (Peck 1978, pp. 91-92). Like Romeo and Juliet, our love will overcome all social and economic barriers (Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 185, 206), and conquer all obstacles (T. Rubin 1983, pp. 142-144). This belief leads to the expectation that true love is the great panacea and will somehow transform one into a person adequate to all trials. If that weren't enough, we then believe that true love will last forever, that we can maintain this happiness forever (T. Rubin 1983, pp. 154-155; Peck 1978, pp. 91-92). We expect, like Cinderella and her Prince, that all our dreams will come true.

In that land of Happy-Ever-After, we believe that somehow we can perfectly satisfy each other's needs (Peck 1978, pp. 91-92), and there will be no anger or argument (Carson 1978, p. 28). There will be no need to talk about the relationship; in fact, there may be a taboo against talking about it (Baxter & Wilmot 1984), for we believe we must always know what the other person means, always be able to read the mind of our beloved (Satir 1972, p. 53).

Exclusivity is a strong characteristic of romantic love

and the myth associated with it is that we must prefer to be together (T. Rubin 1983, pp. 139-142), and thus temptations are impossible if this is really the right person, the true love. From there, it is only a step to possessiveness and jealousy, often supposed signs of the real thing. The final myth, which subsumes all the others, is that if any or all of these expectations do not occur, we have made a mistake, this was not the right person, this is not true love (Peck 1978, pp. 91-92). It becomes an either/or proposition: if it is real love, it works; if it doesn't work, it must not have been real love, but only "puppy love" or infatuation, or just a horrible mistake.

To whatever extent we hold onto these myths, we seem to subscribe to some or all of them as a fairytale package of Romantic Love, which supports our belief in the "magic" of love in our lives.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR FALLING IN LOVE

Some writers about love believe that there are necessary conditions for the state of falling in love. To this researcher, there appear to be seven conditions, even stages, which lead to the act of falling in love. First, a state of readiness, usually socially conditioned; second, a condition of unmet needs; third, specific conditions of the level of one's self-esteem; fourth, attraction to another person, the one to be

loved; fifth, perceptions of the other person as capable of meeting one's needs; sixth, a physiological response stimulated by the person; and seventh, the attachment of the label "falling in love" to that response and its ensuing feelings.

The initial state of readiness consists of a socialization process which promotes love as a basis for marriage (Goode 1959, p. 39), which children are taught through fairy tales, stories and teasing about "boyfriends" and "girlfriends" at early ages. These events are preparation and rehearsal for falling in love, for expecting to fall in love, and for letting love happen (Alberoni 1983, p. 61; Goode 1959, p. 39), which are supported and reinforced in our culture by media and advertising which use sex and love to sell things to us. Our culture tends to assume that love is often an "idealized passion" arising out of a frustrated sexuality (Goode 1959, p. 39), a state of emotional stirring, of wanting to be in love, which can then erupt when a suitable love object appears (Tennov 1979, pp. 106-107). The readiness is complicated and reinforced by the motivation to break free from the strong parent/child bond formed in this culture (Goode 1959, p. 39).

Following a socialized state of readiness is the existence of a condition of needs to be met, which appears to "set one up" for falling in love. One's

immediate life circumstances, where "a certain level of need or tension has accumulated" (Goodison 1983, p. 55), seems to precipitate the lover to this next stage. The needs are many and varied: a need for someone to love, to give love to (Tennov 1979, pp. 106-107); the need to express passion, to express one's sexuality (Walster in Z. Rubin 1974, p. 160); the need for escape from loneliness, for someone to spend time with, to share one's life with (Davis 1973, pp. 32-33); the need to break free from frustration, to overcome obstacles, or to take up challenges (Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 228-229; Walster in Z. Rubin 1974, pp. 158-159); the need to break free from a strong parental bond, often expressed through parental opposition to the loved one or the relationship (the "Romeo and Juliet effect") (Goode 1959, p. 39; Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 228-229; Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 2); the need for external stimulation (Davis 1973, pp. 32-33); and finally, the need to find something of value in everyday life, to overcome one's sense of worthlessness and shame (Alberoni 1983, p. 69).

The condition of the self is important in this stage before one falls in love, as well. According to the literature, one of two conditions of self-esteem may apply. On the one hand, one may have a very low self-esteem, requiring a special need for affection, a feeling of heading into nothingness, even a profound, radical

disappointment in one's self or in what one has loved (Alberoni 1983, p. 69). Dion and Dion (1975, pp. 52-53; 1979, p. 215) found that low self-esteem persons were more strongly attracted to the beloved, experienced a more intensive romantic love, were more responsive to affection, and more liking and trusting in love relationships.

On the other hand, one may have a high self-esteem, resulting perhaps from a recent victory or accomplishment (Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 228-229). High self-esteem might also come from one's rising to overcome obstacles or meet challenges. Many proponents of this view are psychoanalysts who have observed that people who feel unloveable find it difficult to fall in love, and the writers then seem to draw the conclusion that one's self-esteem must be high in order to fully love. These observations are complicated by the apparent ability of some low self-esteem persons to label feelings arising from rejection as "love" instead of "hate." In fact, fear of rejection may actually enhance desire for the beloved in some persons (Tennov 1979, p. 54). Other researchers have observed that people who have external locus of control, believing that their lives are not of their own making but rather something which happens to them, are more likely to fall in love and to see love as something mysterious and volatile (Cunningham & Antill 1982, p. 38;

immediate life circumstances, where "a certain level of need or tension has accumulated" (Goodison 1983, p. 55), seems to precipitate the lover to this next stage. The needs are many and varied: a need for someone to love, to give love to (Tennov 1979, pp. 106-107); the need to express passion, to express one's sexuality (Walster in Z. Rubin 1974, p. 160); the need for escape from loneliness, for someone to spend time with, to share one's life with (Davis 1973, pp. 32-33); the need to break free from frustration, to overcome obstacles, or to take up challenges (Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 228-229; Walster in Z. Rubin 1974, pp. 158-159); the need to break free from a strong parental bond, often expressed through parental opposition to the loved one or the relationship (the "Romeo and Juliet effect") (Goode 1959, p. 39; Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 228-229; Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 2); the need for external stimulation (Davis 1973, pp. 32-33); and finally, the need to find something of value in everyday life, to overcome one's sense of worthlessness and shame (Alberoni 1983, p. 69).

The condition of the self is important in this stage before one falls in love, as well. According to the literature, one of two conditions of self-esteem may apply. On the one hand, one may have a very low self-esteem, requiring a special need for affection, a feeling of heading into nothingness, even a profound, radical

face, pounding heart, trembling hands, accelerated breathing (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 8-9), symptoms which may also be characteristic of joy, anger, happiness, torment, envy, hate, fear, jealousy, rejection, or total confusion, as well as "falling in love." What is important is that the person "falling" defines the experience as "love" (Walster & Walster 1978, p. 8). This is the final stage, attaching the label "love" to the physiological response. One person might recoil in fear, while another labels the response as "love" or "fallen in love," and so one is in love (Walster, in Z. Rubin 1974, pp. 157-162). One author suggests that "falling" in love often disguises the fact that one chooses to "leap" into love (Goodison, 1983, pp. 63-64).

The process, then, is the conditioned state of readiness, the set of unmet needs, the high or low level of self-esteem, the attraction to another or the perception that another can and will meet one's needs. Suddenly, one responds physiologically, and that response is labeled "love."

Whatever the causal conditions, all affect "the ease with which the needing, caring, trusting and tolerance that constitute love can be maintained in the close relationship" (Kelley 1983, p. 280).

FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH ROMANTIC LOVE

The experience of falling in love is characterized by powerful feelings of romantic love. We feel overtaken by feelings of sexual attraction, ecstasy, the urge to become one with the beloved, of being caught or captured, filled with joy and overflowing to share those feelings with others; we experience heightened sensations, a sense of omnipotence, a delight in the present, the desire to surrender or abandon oneself to the other, extreme happiness, fulfillment, liberation, and frequently, the tension of being torn or caught between the extremes of ecstasy and torment. Some or all of these feelings are part of an individual's experience of falling in love.

We recognize, of course, the heightened sensation of erotic, sexual attraction (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55), yet some writers believe that the intensely erotic phenomenon of falling in love has a more transcendent quality than mere sexual attraction and desire. Tennov states that, although sex is never excluded from the love experience, it is neither essential nor adequate (Tennov 1979, pp. 20-22). Kinget asserts that lovers' expressions of sexuality are predominantly symbolic; longing is more characteristic of the lover than fulfillment, and sentiment more typical than sensation (Kinet 1979, p. 252). The delight of a transcendent union may, of course, be achieved through sexual play and intercourse, but also may symbolize

reciprocation, love's highest achievement (Tennov 1979, pp. 20-22)

The ecstasy of "We are one!" may come about with sexual fulfillment, but is also a part of what Peck calls the "sudden collapse of a section of an individual's ego boundaries, permitting one to merge his or her identity with that of another person" (Peck 1978, p. 87; Alberoni 1983, p. 89). This collapse of ego boundaries accounts for the "urge to merge" which is so characteristic of early romantic love. The loneliness which often precedes falling in love is suddenly gone, and one abandons oneself to the beloved with tenderness, kindness and responsibility, as the beloved appears the only person capable of giving pleasure, joy, and life (Peck 1978, p.87; Alberoni 1983, p. 36; Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55).

Ecstasy is a commonly reported accompaniment to love, which is enjoyed during the romantic love stage, but which often gives way to the goal for compatibility as companionate love develops (Lee 1973, p. 253). This ecstasy, or delight in existence, "eclipses all reality" (Tennov 1979, pp. 20-22), is perceived as an "awakening" or revelation (Alberoni 1983, pp. 33, 44, 63). The senses all seem more acute, heightened (Tennov 1979, pp. 20-22); one feels oneself "flooded with powerful life-giving emotions" (Sanford 1980, p. 67). Alberoni

describes this state as like a "blinding light" which is also an absolute danger, which frees one's desire and puts it at the center of his existence, where it becomes a feeling of liberation, happiness, a fullness, producing a desire to do everything one can for the beloved (and oneself) in order to be happy, thus enabling duty and pleasure to come together (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55). Additionally, lovers feel the need to share those deeply-held emotions with others they care about (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55; Tennov 1979, pp. 20-22).

The common feeling of omnipotence, where all things seem possible, all obstacles conquerable through the sheer force of love, is considered by some an "unreality" similar to that of the two-year-old (Peck 1978, pp. 87-88), especially unreal in that it is effortless, not an act of will, but rather something which happens to us, something which captures us (Peck 1978, p. 89; Alberoni 1983, p. 43).

The perception of the absolute uniqueness of the beloved, and one's appreciation for that individuality or specificity, is an unmistakable sign to some that this is love (Alberoni 1983, p. 36). There is a real contentment with the present, as the beloved is perceived to be perfect, and neither lover nor beloved seem in need of personal development or growth (Peck 1978, p. 90). The

lover exaggerates the beloved's virtues and minimizes faults (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55). Some writers, however, believe that idealization and uncritical acceptance of the beloved is not necessarily a component of love (Driscoll, Davis & Lipetz 1972, p. 9).

Perhaps the most unique and characteristic feeling associated with falling in love is the incredible tension between the poles of ecstasy and torment, or pleasure and pain (Alberoni 1983, p. 40; Tennov 1979, p. 44; Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 8-9). Feelings of happiness, passion, torment, desire, and anxiety coexist. The lover wishes to prolong the happy state and at the same time to untangle it from the torment; the lover is pulled by the strength of the feeling, pulled and forced to change, transported to a higher state where the stakes are all or nothing (Alberoni 1983, pp. 40, 43). The lover is torn and pulled, plummeting from sublime contentment to tormented despair. This tension-filled phase is not thought to last very long, unless the lovers are absent from one another (Z. Rubin 1973, p. 191).

Alberoni describes the consequences of resolving this polarity when he says that some people have no peace "until they have transformed the splendid experience of their love into something controllable, circumscribed, defined." They then pay the price of the disappearance of ecstasy, a return to everyday tranquillity, which may

again be interrupted by boredom, bitterness and disappointment (Alberoni 1983, p. 44). Thus, he implies that falling in love is not a part of ordinary life, but is a break from everyday life, a transgression from the ordinary (p. 43). The ordinary life is characterized by poles of tranquillity and disappointment, whereas the love polarities are ecstasy and torment.

There is new evidence of a biochemical basis for love. Examining the interconnections of the limbic system and adjacent areas such as the hypothalamus, scientists know that those connections are responsible for our ability to experience feelings. Liebowitz describes how a thought connects to the human's pleasure or displeasure center to determine the emotion aroused. Pleasurable or positive memories or thoughts of oneself and another establish a firm link to the pleasure center. Liebowitz says clearly, "Love and romance seems to be one, if not the most powerful activator of our pleasure centers" (Liebowitz, 1984, pp. 40-48), resulting in the wide variety of pleasurable emotions aroused during this time.

BEHAVIORAL CORRELATES OF ROMANTIC LOVE

Everyone recognizes lovers by their behaviors; they gaze for long periods into each other's eyes; they orient to one another to let the world know they are a couple; they touch; their volatile emotions are more easily seen;

they use a secret, personalized language; and they show great tenderness and consideration to each other. Other behaviors are less obvious to outsiders, but are equally indicative that the two are in love: intimate self-disclosure; intimate sexual behavior; sensitivity to metacommunication and frequent interpretation of the other's words and actions; tests for "Do you love me?"; and perceptions of the beloved as more attractive and perfect than objective reality warrants.

Eye gaze is a popular behavior to study in lovers because eye contact, in our culture, serves as a vehicle for intimate communication, indicating that the communication channel is open, signifying the uniqueness of the union of the two lovers (Z. Rubin 1973, pp. 222-224; Cunningham & Antill 1981, p. 41). Gazing into each other's eyes for longer periods may be the first behavior indicating a couple is in love (Davis 1973, pp. 67, 77-78; Tennov 1979, p. 63). In a crowd or at a party, one can notice lovers "sneaking glances" at one another, unable to take their eyes away from each other (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55), because, as Davis says, "mutual involvement is communicated at peak intensity" through gazing "longingly and wistfully at each other's communication apparatus, particularly the eyes" (Davis 1973, p. 67).

The lovers' special form of personal communication

develops and more channels are used for sending and receiving messages, including emotion-laden nonverbal cues (Hopper, Knapp & Scott 1981, p. 23). The lovers give each other linguistic and kinesic signals, indicating a total communication pattern of intimacy (Davis 1973, pp. 73-74). The language of personal idioms develops, including nicknames and other expressions of affection, teasing insults, labels for outsiders, and euphemisms for sexual references or invitations (Hopper, Knapp & Scott 1981, pp. 22, 25-26; Davis 1973, p. 75). This specialized, unique-to-the-relationship language helps to define the norms of the lovers' relationship and to develop and enhance its cohesiveness (Hopper, Knapp & Scott 1981, p. 23).

The specialized language supports opportunities for more intimate self-disclosure, hours spent in telling the beloved about oneself, as a way of making the beloved participate in the totality of the lover, sharing their pasts, showing their feelings, developing trust, and disclosing secrets and personal, scarce information (Alberoni 1983, pp. 34-35, 112; Petty & Mirels 1981, p. 494; Hopper, Knapp & Scott 1981, p. 23; Orlinsky 1979, p. 210; Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55).

Knapp asserts that lovers are more sensitive to metcommunication, more inclined to talk about the way they talk to each other (Knapp 1984, p. 6). This

sensitivity to the communication pattern in the relationship often leads to a close scrutiny of the lover's words and actions, which may elevate the relationship to an almost mystical, religious level.

For those who are in love, the interpretation of intimate communication assumes a special place. The lover so consecrates all of his beloved's behavior that her every word and gesture compose for him a holy book, one he feels compelled to read over and over again in memory in order to diagnose the precise degree of her devotion to him and, hence, the precise gradation of his state of grace (Davis 1973, p. 72).

The body posture of lovers betray them as well. There is a real "inclination" toward each other, manifesting itself in a visible incline or slope toward each other (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55). Standing distance becomes closer, the lovers take on side-by-side and matching "kinesic modalities" with more physical contact, more similar or symmetrical body postures, as they "position for courtship," arranging and rearranging their bodies to keep others out and announce their "we-ness" to the world (Davis 1973, pp. 65-66; Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 12-15). Gestures of affection, appeal, invitation and seduction increase (Orlinsky 1979, p. 210; Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 12-15).

Communication channels increase in intimacy along a continuum of behaviors from gazing to speaking to each

other in special ways (Davis 1973, pp. 77-78) before continuing to touch and engage in sexual behaviors. As the relationship moves to greater intimacy, lovers obtain implicit permission to touch, press, or compress each other physically, as shown by their constant adjustment of clothing, grooming behaviors, standing and sitting closer and closer, fondling each other's possessions -- generally, intruding more and more into each other's personal space (Davis 1973, pp. 69-70; Alberoni 1983, p. 65). Any sensory stimulation at this point may lead to sexual arousal. As Dr. Talmey, a 1919 "expert" on love, recognized:

The meaning of all such attachments is the desire to satisfy the senses . . . any of the five senses may be the starting point of sexual desire. . . The generative centre is in communication with the centres of all the other senses and may be excited by them (Talmey 1919, p. 9).

In fact, science confirms that our nervous systems have so evolved that we seek out certain kinds of rewarding experiences, such as romance. People in love may have "peak experiences" when they feel at one with the beloved. This may be the same brain chemical system as those affected by mind-altering drugs.

This capacity to feel energized and excited is the mechanism that first makes us feel we are in love. Falling in love is having your pleasure center

go bonkers in response to an interaction with another person (Liebowitz, 1984, pp. 69-74).

Sexual behavior, however it is expressed, is a usual accompaniment to falling in love. We associate sex with love to a great degree, leading Greenfield to state that "we believe and behave like we are in love when we engage in sex" (Greenfield 1965, p. 365).

Lovers progress from gazing and speaking to touching, kissing, and intercourse, usually in that order. The contact between body parts usually involves hands, arms, shoulders, lips, body, breasts, and genitals, in that order (Davis 1973, pp. 77-78). The progression occurs as the lover begins testing to see if the beloved wants the relationship to move to a higher level. Then the next behavior "locks" the relationship into that next level, which is why the first touch, the first kiss, the first "I love you," and often the first overtly sexual move or act of intercourse, set off chain reactions to other behaviors as intimate. These "firsts" or "triggers" are exceedingly difficult to initiate because of the high possibility of rejection of the lover, which would attack the lover's self-esteem, and so the timing in these love plays is crucially important (Davis 1973, pp. 77-78, 80; Owen 1985).

Other tests besides physical and sexual ones are common among lovers, as each lover has a thousand different ways of asking the crucial question: "Do you love me?" Alberoni

claims that these tests are a way to discover which of the couple really loves the other, as it is the person who is really in love who incessantly poses the "Do you love me?" question and is also the one who gives the gifts, proving that the beloved is loved (Alberoni 1983, pp. 66-67, 74).

The lover, according to studies by Dion and Dion, has selective perceptual distortion, perceiving the beloved as more attractive, less distorted in laboratory experimental settings, and more perfect, than do those individuals not in love (Dion & Dion 1975, pp. 50-53; 1976, p. 170; Cunningham & Antill 1981, p. 41). Lovers exaggerate the beloved's virtues, minimize faults, and show great tenderness, kindness and responsibility toward the beloved (Walster & Walster 1978, pp. 54-55). Those kinds of transformations, such as "considerateness," prove more important over time as their consistency increases (Kelley 1979, pp. 117-118).

For the "limerant" or addicted lover, whose love may not be reciprocated, other things in life seem less central, less important than love. For many lovers, limerant or not, the focus on love and on the beloved set up conditions where emotions are more volatile, more obvious, and mood changes are more abrupt (Tennov 1979, p. 45).

The various behaviors typifying love make interesting work for scholars and researchers in communication, social psychology and psychology. What is difficult to discern is the fine line which separates those "in love" from those

with strong, intimate friendships. As one lesbian woman states, "The only difference between a friend and a lover is where you put your hands." Since we often recognize lovers by their behaviors, continued study of those behaviors and how they differ from behaviors in other intimate relationships should be valuable.

TYPOLOGIES OF LOVE

For years, writers have been attempting to categorize the types of human relationships. Knapp simplifies the list to five kinds of relationships: stranger, acquaintance, buddy, close friend, and lover (Knapp 1984, p. 30). He points out that this culture has certain role expectations for relationships: family members are supposed to be close; male/female relationships are romantic; friendship should occur only with same sex persons; and intimacy leads to marriage. Davis, on the other hand, splits relationships into two types; intimates and non-intimates. Non-intimates do not reciprocate a large number of intimate behaviors, and are of four kinds: strangers, role (or secondary) relations, acquaintances, and enemies. Intimates consist of friends, lovers, spouses and siblings (Davis 1973, pp. xviii-xix).

Definitions of love relationships range in sorts from those characterized by "mere sublimated sexual lust" to those which seem to have a "sort of excess of friendship" (Lee 1973, p. 4). Usually, most people distinguish two types of love, which Hatfield and Walster label "passionate"

and "companionate" (Hatfield 1982, p. 268). Cunningham and Antill point out that many researchers oversimplify this antithesis as a simple tension between eros and agape or the sacred and profane types of love. They report various contrasts such as sentiment and emotion (Turner), extrinsic and intrinsic (Blau and Seligman), conjugal and romantic (Burgess), reasonable and unreasonable (Lilar) and deficiency-love (or "D-love") and being-love ("B-love") (Maslow, McGovern).

The central meaning of these typologies is captured in the contrast between. . . emotions felt and acts performed in gratitude for past rewards or in hope of future ones. . . and. . . emotions or acts with no such apparent implications. The development of love pivots on this tension between concern for self and concern for the partner (Cunningham & Antill 1981, pp. 30-31).

The difficulty, in this modern age in America, of labeling the relationship correctly, causes us all concern. People live together who aren't married, or who aren't in love, yet consider themselves a couple.

American Couples authors Blumstein and Schwartz stated it this way:

We often use the word partner to refer to one member of a couple. We do this because it was hard to find one term appropriate to all four kinds of couples. . . Other possibilities included mate, lover, spouse, significant other, and posslq (census terminology for "People of Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters"), but

none of these seemed satisfactory. We also do not like using the word cohabitators, but could find no more felicitous term (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983, pp. 22-23).

By far the most innovative classification of love relationships has been done by J. A. Lee and continued and revised by others. Lee characterizes six types of love: mania, eros, ludus, storge, agape, and pragma. Of these, eros, ludus, and storge are considered primary types (using a color analogy), which combine to produce two secondary sets of love types: (1) compounds: mania, pragma, and agape; and (2) mixtures: ludic eros, storgic ludus, and storgic eros (Lee 1973, pp. 15-16, 21-22). Lee believes that persons may begin with one style of loving, then change in response to a partner to an altered style, then respond entirely differently with another lover. He also considers the possibility that two concurrent love relationships may obtain, in each of which the lover relates quite differently to the partner (Lee 1973, pp. 23-24). Lee admits his typology is unique, but not the last word. In answer to the question, "How many kinds of love are there?" he replies that it depends on "what measure you use to distinguish kinds, which in turn depends on what measure is convenient to the observer" and how particular the researcher is (Lee 1973, p. 10). His measures were based on a "Method of Ideal Types," a set of mental constructs

which may not exist in real life.

Other researchers have done studies using Lee's typology and have further described the types (Hendrick et al 1984; Hatkoff & Lasswell 1979; Lasswell & Lobsenz 1980).

Marston, Hecht, and Robers (1986) concluded that love may be experienced in a variety of different ways, and identified six types of romantic love experiences: (1) collaborative, (2) active, (3) secure, (4) intuitive, (5) committed, and (6) traditional romantic love.

Hunter, Nitschke and Hogan (1981) have studied one particular type, which they label "addiction," as has Peele (1975). It is the type called "mania" by Lee and "possessive love" by Lasswell and Lobsenz. This type is an extreme example of romantic love, and is similar in many ways to Tennov's concept of the "limerant" lover (Tennov 1979; McWhirter and Mattison, 1984).

While typologies provide a degree of understanding of the natures of love, each person has a typology of relationships in general and of loving relationships in particular which guide our expectations and communication patterns in love relations. Falling in love is a unique experience, a dramatic event in one's life, usually never to be forgotten.

Falling in love is the arrival of the extraordinary. . . an exploration of the possible; the person we fall in

love with offers us a way to modify
our everyday experience radically
(Alberoni 1983, pp. 114, 132).

THE METHOD

RATIONALE FOR METHOD

A qualitative research method was used in this study, in order to obtain a phenomenological perspective on the experience of "falling in love." The researcher sought to uncover the communication behaviors of persons who experience falling in love. By asking questions in interviews, by observing persons who described themselves as being in love, and by drawing inferences based on those observations and the literature, the researcher attempted to describe the phenomenon and inquire about its meaning in human communication (Spradley 1980, p. 7).

The qualitative method is characterized by the "continual forming and reforming of possible hypotheses" (Van Maaenen 1983, p. 258). Throughout the process, the qualitative researcher must hear with the ears of, and take in the words of, the respondents, and at the same time remain outside the process looking in, observing, searching for meaning or structure to tentatively impose on the data, and compare those two viewpoints at each step. The researcher first examined the literature for tentative hypotheses and categories of response, then collected answers from respondents, discovering new categories in the process. Her comparison of the emergent categories with those present in

the literature allowed for one instance of an "insider/outsider" check for validity in the attempt to describe and understand the nature of the "magic" of falling in love.

The primary data collection strategy was that of the intensive interview. In addition, a screening questionnaire was used to choose subjects who were more likely to have had the experience of "magic" in their love relationship. Another aid to the process was the interviewer's subjective field notes and analysis written during and after the intensive interviews, along with the researcher's participant observation notes taken in informal observations and brief unstructured interviews.

The researcher expected that such dimensions of romantic love and the state of falling in love as power, involvement/commitment, attachment, intensity/intensification, and happiness/caring would be tapped and emerge from the data.

Because the researcher was interested in discovering the interrelationship of constructs, feelings, behaviors, and language as described by the subjects, she chose this methodology. Thus, the method resulted in findings of great richness of description, the observation of relevant nonverbal cues, emergence of both difficulty of expression and flowering discussions filled with metaphors and analogies -- all data unlikely to be tapped by other

methods.

The research questions were: (1) What does one who is in love mean by saying s/he is in love? (2) What does "falling in love" mean to such a person? (3) If love was, indeed, a "magical" experience, how is it described, characterized? (4) What are the attributes of this kind of "magical" love? (5) What are the dimensions and elements of this kind of love?

SUBJECTS

The subject population was solicited from informal contacts, an approach called "network sampling" or "selective sampling" (Granovetter 1976; Schatzman & Strauss 1973). The researcher asked friends, acquaintances, and university contacts to think of persons they knew to be in love at the present time, and to ask those people if they were willing to fill out a questionnaire and perhaps be interviewed.

Of the fourteen subjects, half were characterized by a homosexual romantic preference, the other half by heterosexual preference. Not all subjects characterized themselves as exclusively heterosexual or homosexual in their romantic behaviors. Approximately half of each sexual preference group was male (four heterosexual, three homosexual), the other half female (three heterosexual, four Lesbian). All but one subject were college-educated, two had advanced degrees in counseling, four others had taken

college communication courses. All were white. Ages ranged from twenty-two to thirty-six. The only condition for volunteering was that the subjects presently considered themselves to be "in love." No conditions were set on length of relationship involvement and no requirements were made about the partner of the subject.

Heterogeneity based on sexual preference was desirable in this study because few love studies have included both homosexual and heterosexual romantic subjects, and many of the definitions of romantic love and of falling in love are limited to opposite sex pairs. Few studies examine the experience of homosexual love, although Lee applied his typology of styles of loving to partner selection by gay males (Lee, 1976). The Mendola Report (Mendola 1980) clearly illustrated that the experience of falling in love, and the subsequent commitment to a permanent or serious life partner, is not exclusive to heterosexual couples. Peplau (1981) looked at constructs such as intimacy and self-fulfillment in homosexual relationships. But because studies such as these are few, this researcher desired to include both heterosexual and homosexual lovers in her study.

PROCEDURES

Subjects were given an initial briefing, as follows:
"Jacquie Gibson, a graduate student in Interpersonal Communication, is looking for subjects for a communication

thesis study on falling in love. She needs people who consider themselves to be "in love" at the present time. Both heterosexual and homosexual subjects are sought for this study. Subjects will be asked to answer a short questionnaire, from which some will be chosen to participate in a one- to two-hour interview with a researcher about the experience of falling and being in love. If you participate, your confidentiality is assured, and I will send you a report of the study's results when it is completed."

Subjects were given a screening questionnaire (Appendix A). With appropriate scores from the questionnaire (see scoring criteria, Appendix B), participants then met with a researcher for individual intensive interviews, which were recorded on audio tape, with permission (see Appendix C), then transcribed. Confidentiality was assisted by the use of pseudonyms.

Once a subject agreed to participate, and scored in the acceptable range for the screening questionnaire, an interview schedule was established, all interviews taking place in a neutral location, a local business office. A pilot study of two subjects was conducted prior to data collection of the fourteen subjects, to ensure that the interviews were appropriate in length and to test out the screening and interview questionnaires for language and style, allowing for necessary revision. As the pilot

interviews elicited considerable data and no major changes were necessitated in the questionnaire, the pilot interviews were integrated into the study data.

At the beginning of the interview, confidentiality and anonymity were again promised, and at the end, participants' questions were answered. The researcher kept field notes for each interview, noting pertinent nonverbal behaviors of the participant, moods of both subject and interviewer, time of day, room conditions, and any emerging impressions the interviewer gained. This process of taking field notes provided a second order level of data to work with, the perspective of the outside observer who is there to cross-check her observations with the real-life participant for accuracy and confirmation. This cross-checking is one way to provide the recursiveness unique to qualitative research, allowing the researcher to study patterns and repetition, promoting a cyclic rather than a linear process. Another example of recursiveness comes from the process of category development, during which, over a period of several months, categories emerged, blended, re-emerged, re-combined into thirteen distinct sets. As some categories/constructs disappeared for a while, others repeatedly rose to the surface, like strawberries in a pot of jam.

The interview questionnaire may be seen in Appendix D. At the end of the interview, each participant was thanked and promised a short summary of results. During the post-

interview conversation, the researcher asked for responses to the process, how the respondent felt, whether all the important information was examined, and so forth.

Immediately after the respondent left, the researcher wrote up her participant observation notes based on the conversation and on the interview. Those notes then became a part of the data for the study. Field notes were typed immediately after the interview, and transcriptions of the interview typed in an expedient manner. The taped interviews were transcribed in pertinent descriptive form, not necessarily verbatim, with descriptions and appropriate quotations recorded on coded four by six inch index cards. Coding information included: (1) participant pseudonym; (2) age of participant; (3) sex and (4) sexual preference of the participant; and (5) the number of the interview question to which the statement was a response.

MATERIALS

The Screening Questionnaire (Appendix A) supplied to each participant selected subjects for subsequent interviews, based on appropriate scores for the various questions on the scale. For those excluded on the basis of their score on the screening questionnaire, the following form was given or spoken to the subject:

"Thank you for your participation in the research on

falling in love. We appreciate your time taken to fill out this questionnaire. We do not need anything further from you at this time, as the particular needs of this study tend to move in another direction. Thank you again for participating."

Other materials included tape recorders and tapes to cover all the participant interviews, which were conducted by a researcher with each of the fourteen participants. Consent forms (Appendix C) were given to gain permission for taping and to ensure the subjects' rights. Writing materials were required to record the researcher's observations and field notes taken during and after the interviews. The researchers then transcribed the tapes onto typewritten pages which were then xeroxed and the appropriate data transferred (pasted) to file cards for categorization.

THE INTENSIVE INTERVIEW

The primary data collection method was the intensive interview, the purpose of which was to "elicit. . . rich, detailed materials" for qualitative analysis, to "discover the informant's experience" of the situation or topic (Lofland & Lofland 1984, p. 12). An intensive interview study generates questions meriting further investigation, leading often to more in-depth research studies (Harvey et al 1983, pp. 452-453; Bradford 1980, p. 498).

Recent studies have used the interview methodology to provide the rich data required for the research. Cheney (1983), for example, used interviews to yield retrospective accounts by individuals in organizations, to explore their organizational identification as it related to decision-making.

The interview can help the researcher find "the very logic of [the subjects'] thinking about the content of their reality" (Schatzman & Strauss 1973, p. 69). The wealth of this sort of highly detailed information is usually unobtainable to outsiders, but the researcher can tap into it during the interview. Such interviews are effective because of the direct participation by the interviewer, who can influence the nature of the evidence by structuring the interaction, probing, seeking clarification and elaboration. Thus, an intensive interview can give a more complete and accurate assessment of the phenomenon, as perceived by the subjects being examined, than can other methods.

The pilot interviews assisted the researcher in refining both the screening questionnaire (Appendix A) and the interview questionnaire (Appendix D). The screening interview was rewritten, and the interview questionnaire was left substantially the same throughout the fourteen interviews, new probe questions added over time, and some questions left unelaborated. Both original and rewritten forms appear in Appendices A and D. During the interview

process, the questionnaire was only subtly altered (e.g., some questions combined, worked through briefly, or even omitted, especially toward the end of the sample of subjects), based on data which arose from the process, indicating that certain questions are subsumed under other questions, or that most subjects responded the same way to the questions.

An intensive interview has the advantage of (1) tapping perceptions, feelings, thoughts, expectations and memories; (2) obtaining descriptions of private events; and (3) being relatively easy to obtain, convenient and inexpensive (Harvey et al 1983, pp. 452-453). During the interviews in this study, the basic (numbered) questions remained the same. Probes varied, depending upon the subject's response, and elicited more information on themes as they developed in the conversation. This process allowed the researcher the leeway to flow with the respondent's mood and feelings, to key into areas touched upon in the answers and to follow through with apparently meaningful response directions.

ANALYSIS

The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data, allowing for a constant flow of data and emerging categories on the nature of the "magic" of falling in love (Lofland & Lofland 1984, p. 136). After each four interviews were completed (e.g., after #4, #8, #12, and then #14) and transcribed, the data were put onto coded index

cards. The researcher would then begin to sort the data cards into categories as they emerged from the data (the inductive process), grouping similar responses into mutually exclusive, exhaustive categories (Lofland & Lofland 1984). As the categories emerged, the researcher then coded each response into as many categories as possible (the deductive process), then compared the response with others in that category. It is important in this process to ensure that all responses fit the category they're placed in, and that the properties of that category become increasingly clearer. Category descriptions were revised each time the coding was done (after each four interviews). Responses were compared with the property or description of the category they were filed into, and as the process continued after each four interviews, the categories shifted and changed. The researcher sought emergent higher level concepts (called "delimiting the theory") as she attempted parsimony with the data.

Two kinds of reliability were established in the study. First, two independent inductive judges, who were not research assistants and who were not familiar with the respondents, were asked to cross-check the data. Both female and in their mid-thirties, one was a master's candidate in nursing, engaged herself in an ethnographic study, and familiar with the qualitative process. The other was a doctoral candidate in sociology, also well experienced

in qualitative research. These judges were asked to inductively discover categories, given a sample of responses. Instructions to the judges were as follows: "Given these sample responses, please sort them into at least three and no more than twelve discrete categories. Please label the category by a word, phrase, or paragraph description." The researcher's and the inductive judges' categories were then collapsed together to form higher level categories.

The second reliability check came through asking independent deductive judges to sort responses into the researcher's categories. Three such judges were used. The first, a twenty-two-year-old senior linguistics student, volunteered her services. The second, a thirty-five-year-old master's level speech pathologist/audiologist, sorted the data cards at two different times. The third, a twenty-eight-year-old communication graduate with an M.A., experienced in qualitative research, sorted once. All were female. Instructions to these judges were as follows: "Please sort these responses by filing each data card into one of the following categories:. . ."

The use of several coders provided categories which were far more reliable than those generated by a single coder (Shellen 1985, p.2). After each deductive sorting, the researcher and the judge discussed the matches and mismatches, leading the researcher to modify, rename or

collapse categories.

The statistical test used for the reliability of two or more independent coders was the Cohen kappa (k), the coefficient of agreement (Cohen 1960), which provided reliability for the deductive categories. Although the substance of qualitative research comes through the analysis phase, the inductive process of categorization, Shellen says:

But analytic categories do not exist in a vacuum. . . At the point in a qualitative study when samples of language are sorted by the researcher into the analytic categories, an appropriate test of the reliability of this sorting should be mandatory (Shellen 1985).

At different times, the three coders sorted the data into categories. After each sorting, a table was constructed which represented all possible combinations of agreement and disagreement between the coder and the researcher about how they classified the responses. The "agreement diagonal" on the table illustrates the instances where the coders agreed on the category into which responses were filed. The formula for computing kappa is as follows:

$$k = (fo - fc) \div (N - fc)$$

where k = kappa, the index of agreement or intercoder reliability,

fo = the observed frequency of agreements,

fc = the frequency of agreement which would be expected by chance,

and N = the grand total of all cells in the table, or total number of units of data sorted by coders regardless of agreement or disagreement.

After kappa was computed, the researcher checked to see that the desired reliability index was reached. In this study, if the reliability were not satisfactory (i.e., at least $0.75 = k$), the researcher resorted the categories. Reliability scores were 0.55, then 0.66, 0.74, and eventually 0.85, after reworking the category labels each time.

In this manner, the research questions were answered through a detailed, rich, real-life study of real people in love, who described their experience. The researcher's task was to let the categories of that experience emerge from the data, after allowing time and the inductive method to work through the researcher and the data, toward the goal of the emergence of new theory.

RESULTS

Participants in this study responded to questions about the nature of falling and being in love, the feelings they associate with love, and the ways in which they communicate their love. They were asked to describe their love experience and to compare it with other romantic relationships and friendships.

The fourteen intensive interviews yielded a mass of data - more than a thousand cards full of quotations and participant observation notes. All verbal data from the interviews were sorted into emergent categories after each fourth interview. Eventually, in order to reduce the data to a manageable set, the researcher randomly chose every fourth card as an analysis set. Those 259 data cards were then placed into categories using the constant comparative method. Many "passes" were made on the data set by the researcher through twelve different sets of categories (see Appendix E). After reducing the analysis set to 259 cards, the researcher developed new categories. The inductive judge then sorted the 259 cards into new categories, and the final set of fifteen categories represents the ultimate integration of these sets, modified by sorting and feedback from deductive judges. The final categories consist of the following fifteen categories. An asterisk (*) indicates carryovers from the previous set.

FINAL CATEGORIES

- *1. love is . . .
- 2. romance
- 3. attraction
- 4. comparisons
- *5. commitment
- *6. problems
- *7. communication
- *8. feelings
- 9. ambivalence
- 10. description of the self/lover
- 11. description of the beloved
- 12. description of the relationship
- *13. the future
- 14. physical factors
- 15. sexuality

Respondents in this study conceptualized their love experience in a variety of ways. As in the Marston, Hecht & Robers study (1986), lovers described their experience in terms of relational constructs (such as commitment, reciprocity, or security), physiological responses (heart beating "ka-tunk"), and by describing behaviors.

Additionally, respondents in this study described and labeled many different feelings and emotional responses, and attempted the expression of the inexpressible through metaphors, analogies, and vivid, figurative language.

Since the final categories resulted from twelve passes through the data cards and emerged out of only one-quarter of the data, the typologizing was very difficult and, as a result, is possibly less meaningful than categories derived from the full set. The final categories were seen by the researcher, however, as a legitimate structure for

agreement by several judges in making sense of the data. The process represented by the series of thirteen category sets (see Appendix E) seems far more illustrative of the experience of falling in love than do the final categories. The various groups of categories, emerging as the process continued, identified and confirmed nearly all the dimensions and elements of love present in the literature. In fact, the greatest problem in this stage was that there were so many different ways to categorize the data! The typological template represented by the final category set serves its purpose, but should not be seen as the definitive breakdown for analysis of the data.

Further, since the interview questions served their purpose of providing responses which answered the research questions, the data are reported according to the respective research question regardless of where they occurred in the interview. The process of addressing the research questions has been an inordinately intuitive process, of the researcher's becoming familiar with the responses over time, and watching the "patterns in the rug" emerge.

Therefore, in the analysis of the results of this study, the researcher has attempted to bring out the richness of the data. In answering each of the research questions, the researcher has addressed one or more of these conceptual patterns: (1) relational constructs, (2) physiological responses or behaviors, (3) feelings and emotional

responses, and/or (4) figurative language.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What does one who is in love mean by saying s/he is in love?
2. What does "falling in love" mean to such a person?
3. If love was, indeed, a "magical" experience, how is it described, characterized?
4. What are the attributes of this kind of "magical" love?
5. What are the dimensions and elements of this kind of love?

The responses which answered the first two research questions are difficult to separate, especially when it comes to examining the relational constructs they identified. Therefore, their responses to these questions will be combined below.

WHAT LOVERS MEAN WHEN THEY SAY THEY ARE IN LOVE AND WHAT THEY MEAN BY FALLING IN LOVE

The first research question asked was "What does one who is in love mean by saying s/he is in love?" The second research question was: "What does 'falling in love' mean to such a person?"

Common responses expressing the meanings of love were often found in the category "love is. . . ." Respondents spoke in terms of relational constructs such as letting go of control, needs fulfilled, reciprocity, bonding, uniqueness, and commitment, in order to get to the meaning

of their own experience.

The matter of giving up or being out of control was especially prominent in the interviews of three of the women participants. Patti, 32, spoke often of her difficulty in "letting go" when she fell in love with Paul. Her whole interview, in fact, could be characterized as "The Story of Patti's Letting Go of Control and Allowing Herself to Love". In her own words, she confessed:

I guess I had decided in my head that I was not going to fall in love. There was just no way I was going to do that. And so I would tell him that I just wanted to have a casual affair with him, and I didn't want him to be dependent on me for his happiness, and I fought it and fought it and fought it.

Later, Paul gently told her to "just let go." She did, and thus found herself in a committed love relationship.

Emma, a 29-year-old involved in a committed Lesbian relationship, said:

I guess the whole sense of falling is of being out of control. When you're not in control, you're not jumping, not jumping into love. . . I think it's an issue of control, for me.

Marit, 36, tried to make sense of her experience like this:

. . . I believe that . . . maybe the falling in love has to do with . . . letting go of the self, and falling into that relationship.

Another construct, needs fulfilled, was addressed by several participants who spoke of needs. 24-year-old Ray, a

quiet man who used his words carefully, described it this way:

A sudden realization. I really sensed a need to see her again. Why do I need her so much? That's how I detected I was falling in love.

Sue, a 29-year-old Lesbian, mused about the ways she and Jane fill each other's needs:

It's also a nice feeling to know that I can get what I need and that she's willing to give to me. We talk about our needs -- whether it's holding each other, loving each other, rubbing each other's backs, or listening to each other when we've had a rough day at work -- things of that nature.

Another construct, reciprocity, was especially well addressed by two male homosexuals. Calvin, 24, believed "that true love has to be reciprocal, infatuation doesn't." Blake, 26, also stressed his need for reciprocity in a true love relationship, when he said:

. . . to me, falling in love is not a unilateral thing. I do not say that I've fallen in love with someone who does not love me. I say that I love, or am infatuated, or am attracted. "In love" requires reciprocal, mutual activity.

Patti confirmed that reciprocity was one of the factors which distinguished her relationship with Paul from other relationships, when she said this:

. . . [in previous relationships] I was totally giving everything, I felt like I was always giving, giving, giving. It's a real two-way thing with Paul.

Respondents sometimes spoke of love as a particular kind of bond. Marit said:

. . . love can increase with trust, and with sex, and with sharing, and the bonding that goes with loving.

Patti told me how she and Paul talked about their relationship like this:

We have lots of conversations about our relationship, and the way I see the bond we have, I see the love, the bond, that feeling as. . . the image I have of the bond, the love, is not one with the relationship. It's a sort of a basis, but not only a basis. The relationship is this, and the love is here [she used her hands to illustrate the model], and it just sort of flows up into it [the love radiates up from the base into the level of the relationship].

Uniqueness was another construct lovers talked about. Most lovers felt that their own love experience was utterly unique and special, and they used those words repeatedly. Calvin, who often found it difficult to talk personally about his relationship unless he was relating a story, instead relied on sweeping generalizations:

. . . love is very exceptional, based on the energies and personalities of two very specific people, and that love is unique unto itself, any love is.

Commitment was another construct which emerged repeatedly. 22-year-old Joe, spoke of it like this:

That commitment. That feeling that I'm glad she loves me and that I've

committed myself to her. With others, it was a commitment to not fool around with anyone else, but more "give me space, give me time with my other friends." But with Mary I don't need that extra space, I want to be with her all the time. I don't feel any need to be separate.

This study confirmed the reports in the literature that lovers see their relationship as utterly unique, special, different from any other. Often participants addressed this construct simply by saying it was "different from any other," "special," or "unique." Chuck, 27, specified the factors that made his relationship unique:

Also, we share our religion, Christ, and that's been a big part of our relationship. Because of that, it's just been a very unique relationship, compared with any other.

Other constructs lovers mentioned were security, peace and contentment, acceptance, safety and protection, sharing, fulfillment or wholeness, selflessness, trust, loss of self, and intensity.

A second way of talking about what the love experience meant to them was by describing physical sensations and behaviors. The experience of "falling" and being in love was described in many ways. They described the unique physiological sensations which seem to accompany this kind of love, and they spoke of their romantic behaviors which are our society's norms for "being in love."

The screening questionnaire (Appendix A:2), with its list

of possible feelings, such as "butterflies in the stomach," encouraged several respondents to talk about those feelings. Lisa, one of the pilot interviewees, actually added several physiological factors to the list in the screening questionnaire. In fact, all the "symptoms" offered in the screening questionnaire were answered by three or more subjects -- symptoms such as a feeling like an electric shock when touching or being touched by the beloved, warmth in the heart, an ache in the stomach. A few subjects added their own symptoms, such as nervousness or "the jitters," an ache or pain in the throat (as well as the stomach or the heart).

Those subjects whose "just fallen" state was present or in the recent past were eager to talk about those feelings. Sue, a 29-year-old Lesbian beginning a long-distance relationship, described it like this:

Having that big empty feeling inside -
- that sad and painful feeling about
leaving her. . . When she told me that
she had butterflies and was really
excited about my calling her back and
told me that I should definitely come
to see her, it just enhanced that
feeling and made the pain go away and
turn into happiness.

24-year-old Rachel coined a new word to describe the feeling in her heart:

Even just hearing his voice, my heart
would go, "ka-tunk, ka-tunk, ka-tunk,
ka-tunk," even when the phone would
ring, my heart would start going "ka-
tunk, ka-tunk, ka-tunk, ka-tunk,"

thinking it might be him.

Lisa, full of words to describe her love, said:

As I go about my day, I just happen to flash on how we're together, and [what] I physically feel then is a warmth, that starts in my heart, and it just goes through my body.

Participants described this "falling in love" stage as filled with romantic behaviors. Dan enjoyed sweeping Annie off her feet.

I like the romance things. . . I enjoy romance. I get a real kick out of taking her flowers, taking her out to dinner.

Calvin, too, loved to be the romantic.

I like to ritualize love a lot. I do really little things. Sometimes you just get this glee when you're around the other person, and you know they'd like this specific thing. Like in the morning, I'll write a little message to him on the mirror. Flowers, sometimes, on special occasions.

Some found no way to make sense of the experience except simply to describe their behaviors. Marit reported her changed behavior like this:

I usually smile a lot . . . and I've been told that I glow a lot. . . I walk down the hall and people that I work with say I'm glowing, or I'm bouncing or something.

Several subjects described their "falling" initially as a very powerful instant attraction. Marit sounded astonished as she said, "It was not very gradual. We're talking instantly!" Blake said,

Gosh, it was pretty quick. I think I knew that I loved Steve the first evening I met him. . . I was aware of a physical attraction, as well as an intellectual and emotional yearning to know more about this individual.

Many respondents were still fresh in the "falling in love" stage, some were just out of it, some were holding onto it as long as they possibly could, and their descriptions could be mixed and shuffled and ascribed to each other in many cases. They all talked about those special, palpable physical/emotional sensations; and they all had explanations of their early and continued attraction to the beloved. Although a few did not consider themselves to be romantics, traditional elements of romance were present in those relationships as well.

A third way of talking about the meaning of being or falling in love was through the use of figurative or metaphorical language, as respondents sought to put the undescribable into words. From Patti's description of love as a "snowball," which grew and grew as it rolled inexorably down the mountainside, out of control, to Emma's extensive metaphor of growing seeds, subjects found themselves speaking in figurative terms, while struggling to make language fit an experience for which we have no language. Emma used this metaphor to explain true love:

Well, it's sort of like sowing seeds. And the seed of infatuation has a shallow layer of soil there, the root system is not deep, and the plant can

grow and flourish for a while, but will eventually die, it doesn't take root and live for a long time. It's a shallow system. It can look like a healthy plant for a while.

But real, true love takes a conscious place of planting, so that roots can go down deep. It takes care and concern, like watering and weeding, and feeding the plant. . . Infatuation often just takes root and starts growing, before you've had time to think about where it should be planted.

And Calvin, the 24-year-old writer, used literary figures of speech to describe the development of his love.

I kind of believe in a certain foreshadowing of events, important events. Certain things that happen a year or so ahead of something, because of that event, you realize why those events stuck in your mind. With Matt it was very much a case of that [foreshadowing].

Expressing the inexpressible is a difficult task, and several participants appeared frustrated by trying to impose language on an overwhelmingly nonverbal experience. So, they speak of constructs, of their behaviors and physical symptoms, and they speak in analogies, metaphors and other vivid, figurative language, in order to bring it to another's world of experience, to be able to share the wonder of it.

HOW DOES ONE DESCRIBE A "MAGICAL" LOVE EXPERIENCE?

The third research question was: "If love was, indeed, a 'magical' experience, how is it described, characterized?"

The answers to this question fell into many categories, culled from the entire interview. No particular question yielded multiple references to the "magic." Rather, references to "magic" emerged throughout the entire interview. Words such as "amazement," "magic," and "uncanny" only begin to describe that sense of awe and wonder at this phenomenon greater than oneself. Lisa's "Isn't it amazing?" was one kind of response. Patti had another:

We talk about how uncanny it is that we fit so well, coming from different sides of the world. Paul sort of sees his whole life as having been waiting for me. And he's been looking and looking and looking for years. And we found that we have in fact crossed paths, been at the same parties together sometimes, etc.

For many respondents it was difficult to precisely describe the experience, and several participants appeared frustrated by trying to impose language on an overwhelmingly nonverbal experience. Some found it easier to describe what they did rather than how they felt or what they were experiencing as a process. Marit reported the difference in her behavior:

I usually smile a lot. . . and I've been told that I glow a lot. . . I walk down the hall and people that I work with say I'm glowing, or I'm bouncing or something.

Subjects frequently found themselves at a loss for words. They often simply looked out the window, held long pauses,

or looked helplessly at the interviewer. Dan spoke for many when he said "It's hard to put this into words, for one thing."

Those who spoke directly of the "magic" simply used that word or (men especially) [used] words such as "electricity" or "chemistry." Sue extended the "magic" of the relationship to "magic" for the relationship.

It also feels nice to be able to play with the magic that I talked about earlier, such as communicating with her -- sending her messages about my love for her without telephone or letter in the middle of the day. . . saying "I'm with you right now and I hear you and I feel you," and she picks up on that at the same time.

Calvin, remembering the early stages of being in love, spoke of his fear of losing the magic:

I was just really scared. I was afraid that what was happening, this magic, would just die, in the middle of July, and he would have stayed, and I didn't want to be responsible.

Some respondents, even though they had experienced a somewhat "magical" stage of love, were too practical to call it that. Instead, the concept was one of other-worldliness, expressed here by Christine. At 26, Christine was a basically practical sort of person who seemed somewhat embarrassed about her out-of-control in-love "phase." She described it like this:

. . . [falling in love is] falling out of reality, and you're sort of in another world for a while, and if you

get everything together, then you come back to reality, back to the world, together.

In addition to responses in the interview, the screening questionnaire effectively found people to interview who had experienced love in that intense, mysterious, "magical" way. Half the interviewed subjects finished the sentence in the screening questionnaire "I am in love. . ." with "madly, totally." Half also reported that love happened, this time, "instantly."

The interviewed subjects confessed to having many of the feelings or "symptoms" of love listed in the screening questionnaire, such as "butterflies," an ache in the pit of the stomach, trembling, warmth in the heart, and euphoria.

Additionally respondents, particularly the heterosexuals, reported comments friends and family made, noticing or teasing about certain behaviors, such as: "your head's in the clouds," "you're always distracted, thinking about her/him." Fully two-thirds of the respondents reported that people had said "you seem so much happier lately."

The difficulty of expressing, in words, the magical and mysterious experience of falling in love was apparent as participants struggled to describe it, immersing themselves in the recent past and attempting to recover the feelings, to relive the moments the researcher asked about.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF "MAGICAL" LOVE

The fourth research question asked "What are the

attributes of this kind of 'magical' love?" Some respondents answered this question by describing important parts of love, relational constructs, such as comfort, contentment, security, intimacy. Additionally, they addressed a long list of emotional responses and feelings which characterized their state of being. They also talked about a great many physical behaviors -- touching and gazing, for example -- which indicated their love. Their descriptions were filled with vivid, figurative language, metaphor and analogy.

Several relational constructs emerged from responses. Nearly all participants related that this love experience was one of comfort, serenity, security. Several respondents spoke of their extreme comfort with the beloved. The participant observation notes from Emma's interview show that she said "a sense of comfort" with "finality." Dan said "peaceful. I feel really at peace with myself and with her." Christine called it "calmness." Lisa said, "I just feel really content and peaceful and fulfilled" every day now.

Joe made explicit his sense of relief and security in this excerpt:

It feels good. Secure. It's a relief, too. When you're single you're always on the prowl, you don't want to be, but you feel you have to be, or else you'll be lonely.

Patti and Marit both used the word "secure." The concept of

the beloved as a safe harbor -- safe, secure, and calm, was a common one.

Another way participants spoke of the attributes of love was by describing their feelings. Participants expressed many positive feelings -- "warm and complete and positive," says Blake, "which, interestingly enough, are like the feelings about myself when I'm doing well. . ."

Mike spoke of a "happy, jovial kind of feeling," wherein he felt "worthy, wanted. I have feelings of great joy." Marit used the words "enjoyment and pleasure. . . the fullness of [the relationship]."

Chad, 27, laughed with pleasure, saying "I like it . . . it's fulfilling." Lisa's great enjoyment of her relationship was expressed as "I really LIKE liking someone that much, that feels great!" Joe said with great enthusiasm, "Oh, yeah. It's that feeling that this person is the best one for me. As long as I keep her, I'll be happy."

Not all feelings associated with this state were positive. Many participants talked about their fears, about how "scary" it was to be this vulnerable. In addition, ambivalent feelings -- the lover's experiencing both agony and ecstasy -- was expected from the literature, and emerged clearly. Sue expressed the feelings of several respondents when she remarked:

I like it [being in love]! I wish

that she were here right now. It's very special and scary at the same time. . . It's overwhelming to talk about these things in a real joyous way -- it's sometimes scary.

Those able to speak about their ambivalence of feeling to the beloved, such as Patti to Paul, reported saying "Well, I love you, and I'm really scared about it." This ambivalence was evident both in the subjects' feelings and in their descriptions of behaviors. Observation notes from Lisa's interview say:

Subject obviously is reminded of the delicate balance she experienced in trying not to show how in love she was, how interested she was, while still trying to get to know the beloved.

A phenomenon characteristic of the romantic lover is idealization of the beloved by those who are "head-over-heels" in love. The "magic" washes over the beloved, coloring her beautiful and talented and charming. Lisa was especially verbal about her perceptions of lover Jamie.

How did I deserve this person? She's so divine!. . . I still look at her, and I still think she's absolutely beautiful. I still have never seen anybody ever, in the four years that we've been together, that I have that reaction to -- that thinking she's the most beautiful, and that she's absolutely the one.

From the first day she saw Jamie, Lisa felt obsessed by her.

Driving home, I kept saying to Betsy, "Oh, she's sooooo wonderful.". And I

know I was just obsessed all the way home. I couldn't think of anything else and I would say, "Remember when she said. . .?" I remembered all the details, how funny her jokes were. . . and I kept saying to Betsy, "What am I going to do? What am I doing to do?"

Four years later, at the time of the interview, she reflected:

Every time I look at her, it's like the first time. . . I can't get over it.

Rachel also spoke at length about how wonderful and amazing Keith was. His perfection was part of the marvelousness of their relationship, which she characterized as "a lot more caring. Not selfish." She then went on to describe Keith this way:

Keith is not selfish at all, he's very giving, and wants to please me. And he's really, really tender.

When Rachel first told Keith how much she loved him, she expressed her admiration as well:

"I love you because you're so on top of everything." 'Cause you know, he really has his act together. He's on top of everything all the time. And I was really surprised, kind of, by how on top of everything he was.

Finally, the attributes of magical, romantic love included physical factors such as touching and being touched by the beloved, scents, mutual eye gaze -- factors the literature says show how the senses are enhanced, more prominent, more sensitive, heightened. One respondent especially mentioned

that the beloved smelled good. From Lisa's interview:

. . . and she smells good [subject giggles]. . . and I think those are really important things for me. I think my background is really oriented to the aesthetic. My parents are artists, and Jamie's an artist, and when I cook, things have to be beautiful, and smell just right. . .

When it came to physical factors, however, most subjects talked about touching and holding the beloved. Marit said "we both like spending a lot of time touching and caressing." Rachel had warm thoughts of their times together:

Afterward [after sex], you know, he'll just lie there for ten minutes or so, just holding me. He always does that. Lots of times we just lie there on the bed, snuggling and cuddling a lot.

Emma addressed the importance of the physical contact in more abstract terms. "Just having that person around you . . . having that 'fix,' emotionally and physically, is really important." Calvin said, "There's this emotional component, that I really want to be with him, that's more important [than sex]." Mike said, "I am more content and even excited by holding, touching, taking naps together."

Lisa related much about their touching, and I noticed that there were long hesitations in her narrative when she talked about holding Jamie.

Lots more touching now. I feel extremely nurtured, with small touches and pecks on the cheeks often throughout the day. Not just when

you're feeling sexual, but just a nurturing touch, something Jamie has never had. Just this sort of nurturing we give one another makes it different.

Most respondents said that this love was different or special in the way they expressed themselves sexually. Lisa feels "fine about saying no to sex, without feeling the pressure I used to feel from my male partners."

For some, sexual intimacy is a small part of their love.

Dan said,

And ours is . . . [embarrassed laughter]. . . we feel close, and sex is a beautiful thing. And we purposefully built our relationship apart from that, so we're not just a combination of our sexual desires, and because of that, I think, we can keep things in a better perspective.

Ray said that sex was only

a small part, it's a sharing part of love which completes it for us, which is very good, but it's only a part of how we express our love.

Patti found herself in a new place, sexually, with Paul. Her belief, before Paul, was that sex should always be exciting, and if it isn't, then something was wrong with her.

We're exploring that, and learning about each other, and I think that in time, for me to know what my sexual life is and what ours is together. . . because mine was so totally screwed up for so many years. . . I look back. When I was married, I used sex like other people use alcohol. The same thing I did with eating. My body

didn't know what was going on.

Now Patti says that making love is giving each other a "charge," a kind of "renewing."

For others, sex was still very central. Marit said, "I'm hot when I'm with him!" Emma is a very reflective person, and her long pauses showed me she was thinking a lot about this question when she said:

We're very active sexually. I think we realize when we've been away, been busy, been involved in new circumstances, that we miss that a lot. It's an intimacy that we very much enjoy and is very much a part of who we are.

The literature on nonverbal communication, and especially the love literature, asserts the importance of mutual eye gaze between loving couples. The respondents in this study were no exception. Marit, recounting the early days of their relationship, said:

I noticed [remembered, looking back] after that, that we had spent time talking in the hallways and stuff, and I had a real hard time because his eye contact was real intense. And I found myself feeling like I'd kind of trip over my shoes, and look at the ceiling and the walls a lot. I thought that maybe there were a few things going on there that I hadn't been paying attention to.

Mike attributes his knowing this was the right person to the "magic" of the eye gaze.

Oh, yeah. There are many people more attractive than Joel. It [love] has to come -- it's something in the eyes,

when the eyes meet and transcend --
there are a lot of people who looked
at me, and I could have fallen in
love, but I didn't.

Sue, in the early stages of a love relationship, thought
about the beloved and her reaction to Sue's intensity.

It must be overwhelming to have me
gazing into her eyes -- my face
touching hers -- especially when she's
not used to baring her soul to someone
else.

Lisa recounted that the first time she and Jamie really had
important time together, they drank wine and "stared at each
other for three hours!"

The vivid, figurative language respondents used to
describe their love experiences was brought into play when
they spoke of the qualities and attributes of love. Dan
spoke of love as an investment:

And I wanted to make an investment, I
was making an investment there. It's
like putting your money into stocks,
checking to see how it's doing, and
it's doing well, and I decide, "Okay,
I'll buy a lot."

Lisa's voice became very soft when she spoke about the
safety she felt with Jamie:

Another thing I feel is that our
relationship is a protected space,
that even when it's tight and tough,
there's such love and protection in
it, our bond really does seem to
protect us.

Emma brought in a sea image when she talked of the changes
that the relationship went through:

But sometimes it's just comfortable.
It ebbs and flows, and not to panic
when it ebbs and get out of the
relationship, but to stay with it.

And Calvin brought up another visual image:

The whole tapestry of how it's [the
relationship] gone, it's really rich.

Love as a gift, the blindness of falling in love, time
"weathering out things in the relationship" -- all these
ways of describing the important aspects of their love
relationship were easily spoken. The experience of a
powerful, emotional experience apparently allows us to tap
into our creative processes and express ourselves in vivid
language, to make comparisons and analogies that express our
feelings better than spitting out words, probably
nonexistent, which accurately describe the reality of the
experience.

The attributes of this "magical" love are rich and varied,
and real people in love talk about them, just as the writers
on romantic love specify the feelings, the constructs, the
behaviors. People in love love to tell others about their
experience -- it helps to make it real, to keep it present,
to bring the "magic" into their daily lives.

THE DIMENSIONS AND ELEMENTS OF "MAGICAL" LOVE

The fifth and last research question was "What are the
dimensions and elements of this kind of love?"

In what was identified in Chapter I as the extant
theorizing on the dimensions of romantic love, this study

found the following "dimensions:"

- . equality or reciprocity;
- . intensity of feeling;
- . pleasure, happiness;
- . commitment;
- . the timelessness of the present moment;
- . authenticity and truth;
- . attachment;
- . attraction and passion;
- . idealization of the beloved;
- . predisposition to help the beloved.

What the literature calls the "distinguishing characteristics" of love also emerged from the interviews -- the apparent "recognition" of each other by lovers on a profound, intuitive level; the desire for inseparability; and attachment.

The literature cited a great many "elements" of romantic love, such as a state of internal conflict and dependency or the "urge to merge" with the beloved. Several elements have already been reported in this chapter, such as idealization of the beloved, tenderness, and the state of internal conflict, of pleasure and pain.

These dimensions, characteristics and elements are extensively overlapping, and many have already been addressed above. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to clarifying overlapping dimensions and elements,

and explaining those elements not yet addressed.

First, let us consider those items considered "dimensions" by the literature. The power dimension, or equality necessary for lovers, seems to have been brought out by those lovers who spoke of the necessity for reciprocity. Additionally, the interview transcriptions show that most respondents showed equality in the frequency and degree to which they spoke about their love for each other (see interview questions #6, 7, and 25 in Appendix D).

The intensity of feeling was not only mentioned by lovers, but was also apparent to the researcher as an element of the interviews. Respondents showed intensity in their voices, in the concentration with which they relived the memories of their first meetings and first expressions of love, and in the enthusiasm with which they greeted each question, as an opportunity to experience again those moments of passion and bliss.

The expression of pleasure and happiness was everywhere apparent, even in those couples such as Blake and Steve who were having serious problems with their relationship at the time of the interview.

Commitment was a term used by most respondents, although their definitions of it may have varied. For Calvin, commitment is the result of what he called the "imperative" of being in love. Emma and Donna eventually came to a formal commitment, eventually a marriage ceremony, after several

months of couples counseling. Dan said, "I am making a total commitment, totally." Christine and George's experience was remarkable in that their first expression of love didn't come until they both knew in their minds and hearts that a lifetime commitment was called for.

We didn't really say we were in love until we got engaged. We didn't just say we were in love. By the time I would verbalize that I was in love, I meant that I wanted to get married, to stay with him for the rest of my life. And George felt the same way about it.

Alberoni (1980) spoke of love's requirements for authenticity and truth, and this element was best expressed by Emma:

[Love is] a desire for that person to speak the truth to me. And help me grow up to, to be open to that truth that she speaks. And a responsibility to be able to speak the truth to her, too.

Attachment is a concept variously defined in the literature, which is certainly assumed in a love relationship, but was not necessarily expressed in the interviews, as it is a construct defined by theorists, not by lovers.

Attraction and passion were present in all the lovers interviewed, even when they maintained that passion expressed through sexual behavior was a minor part of the relationship or no longer of major importance.

The predisposition to help the beloved was expressed in

several ways. Rachel spoke at length about how her daily life is different now, because of the things she and Keith do for one another.

I tell him every day that I love him.
I tell him every day that he's
handsome. And I tell him this stuff
every day, you know. It just kind of
slips out. I don't want him to ever
think that I take him for granted.

Mike also addressed this issue:

When you love someone, you're going to
support them, challenge them, remain
with them through difficulties.

Two of the elements the literature calls the
"distinguishing characteristics" of the in-love state were
well documented in this study. The apparent "recognition"
of lover and beloved was revealed by Patti when she told how
Paul had been "waiting for me" his whole life -- "looking and
looking and looking [for me] for years." Rachel said:

I just think that Keith and I were
really made for each other, I really
do.

Another distinguishing characteristic, the desire for
inseparability, or the "urge to merge," was everywhere!
Christine revealed it when she was explaining how she and
George have "principles" they live by -- such as: "We don't
want to live apart, ever." Dan reported interactions with
Annie like this:

We do say things like, "I don't want
to be away from you." She's leaving
for nine days tomorrow, and I'm going,
"Aaaaaggggggghhhhhh!"

Rachel said it this way:

Keith and I are together almost all
the time. It's never enough, you
know?

Those themes considered "elements" of love were also plentiful in the interview data, such elements as the internal conflict -- the paradox of feeling and behavior, the conflicting feelings -- expressed in various ways; the fantasies surrounding the beloved, often expressed as idealizing statements about the beloved, or about the future; and, of course, passion and arousal. Other elements listed in the literature are illustrated by examples below.

The desire for intimacy was stated well by Emma:

Part of being in love, for me, is that
feeling of being able to be intimate,
to share my feelings, to be right or
wrong. . . the willingness to be
vulnerable to someone. . .

Donna is also my dear friend, but
there's a different quality in my love
relationship with her. This is a
lover relationship, not just a
friendship. The feelings that you
share with someone when you become
lovers is very much a part of our
relationship, and pretty central to
it, too, I think.

Caring and tenderness were expressed by all participants.

Dan said that he and Annie talk about loving and liking, about trust, caring, and appreciation. Rachel mentioned Keith's incredible tenderness, something she may not have expected from a 6-foot, 6-inch football player.

Euphoria was identified by many of the participants in the screening questionnaire. Other participants giggled and laughed embarrassedly throughout their interviews. Happiness and bliss were present on their faces and in their voices.

"Love overcomes all barriers" is another element often identified in the literature. Those who found that love can overcome all social constraints were both heterosexual and homosexual. Patti, in love with a married man, found his undivorced state difficult to cope with, but eventually decided to commit herself to him even if his wife continued to put obstacles in the path of a divorce.

Calvin, a homosexual, was particularly eloquent on the social consequences of loving Matt.

After seeing the movie Crimes of the Heart, I was so depressed, I just wanted to go home and be with him, because it seems like a lot of stuff that's in the world. . . has to do with being anchored to other people. And being a homosexual, not being particularly anchored to my family, because most of my family doesn't know [I'm a homosexual], I just feel like here is my home. . .with this person [subject weeps and sighs] who understands.

Emma, unexpectedly in love with a woman while almost engaged to a man, found herself confronted with a whole series of problems when she realized she was in love with Donna.

At that moment there was this realization that I didn't want her to leave and that I was in love with her.

. . All through it there was this kind of embarrassment. We thought, "My God, we're in love, and women aren't supposed to do these kinds of things." All these stereotypic reactions. But it was really hard to overcome that in some ways.

Later, Emma talked about how this complicated their lives -- they were both involved with men at the time -- and how unreal it sometimes seemed to them. Emma's profession has been a big factor in her decision not to "come out" as a Lesbian, but she is still strongly committed to a life with Donna as life partner.

I believe that it takes a lot of work and commitment. And that a marriage and that commitment affords you a chance to grow spiritually and emotionally, like no other relationship I know about. Just having that common history, it's a real blessing.

Thus, all those dimensions, elements and characteristics of romantic love identified by novelists, psychologists, and social scientists over the years are, in fact, expressed by real people in the throes of love, eager to share their experiences, finding the language somewhat limiting, but expressing, nevertheless, the common truths about the experience of falling in love.

OTHER FINDINGS

At the end of the structured interview, the researcher asked the respondents what else they had to say, what might have been left out, and also what were their reactions to

the questions. Respondents were usually grateful for the opportunity to bring some closure to the interview, to expand on items they had been thinking about, and to add interesting points. Blake, for instance, suggested that we ask questions about their dreams, and went on to elucidate his rich dream life about his love relationship. Sue spoke of how this love relationship has pushed her to learn more about herself. Mike said he felt he had dropped some friends because of the time he spent on his relationship with Joel. Rachel gave out a list of things she wanted to reiterate: they were made for each other, Keith's a wonderful fellow, they work hard at communication and on not taking each other for granted. Chad spoke of the feeling of selflessness he had for his beloved. Marit spoke of peak experience moments she's had with Jeremy, and the playful times. Joe mentioned that his relationship with Mary has made him more cognizant of his purpose -- as a partner, a family man, the long-range plan. In short, each respondent found a way to bring the interview to his or her own close, to sum up, add to, or reflect upon the experience of remembering and ascribing meaning to their falling in love.

The researcher found it significant that many of the subjects talked about the importance of communication with the beloved. It was somewhat surprising that so many of the couples did, in fact, talk about the relationship -- not just their plans for the future, or when the wedding would

be, or how to commit to a same-sex partner without "coming out" to the family. They spoke, sometimes at length, of their conversations about the relationship, about the qualities of the relationship -- trust, exclusivity, playfulness, among others. They related their methods for working out problems by talking them through, and how to overcome barriers put up by the partner. They spoke of their everyday lives, how they planned and changed those structures through communication together.

Heterosexuals and homosexual lovers appeared more similar than different to this researcher, although at least one significant difference arose. Homosexual lovers reported problems arising from the lack of social support for the relationship, problems not encountered by the heterosexuals in this study.

Typical gender-role differences were displayed by males and females in the study, males generally exhibiting more "strong, silent type" masculine communication behaviors, while females did not hesitate to express their feelings and talk about their relationships with or without prompting by questions. Language use differed with regard to the metaphors used in trying to explain the unexplainable -- males employing more scientific terminology, while females used more fanciful terms.

This researcher found her questions well answered, but with many openings for future study. The careful,

systematic look at the dimensions and elements of romantic love in the literature was rewarded by the respondents with literally hundreds of references to those characteristics. The richness of their metaphors brought joy to this language-lover's heart. Their reports of behaviors, rituals, secret language and a vast array of feelings confirmed that falling in love is a complex, life-changing event, worthy of study.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the perceptions of lovers about their love experience, their feelings, and the manner in which they communicate love to the beloved. All subjects professed to be in love and were screened and passed with a screening questionnaire. In all, fourteen subjects were studied, using intensive structured interviews.

The individuals in the study were eager to discuss their love experiences, and readily called up feelings, told the account of their meeting and falling in love, examined the love relationship for differences and similarities with other relationships, and attempted to make meaning of the experience.

FINDINGS

Chapter Three elucidates the findings of the study. The elements, dimensions, and distinguishing characteristics of romantic love specified in the previous literature were, for the most part, confirmed by participants of this study. Additionally, the screening questionnaire proved to be an effective tool for separating out those lovers who were more characteristic of the romantic or erotic lover, identified by his or her feelings or behaviors, as compared with the more ludic, storgic or pragmatic lovers of Lee's typology. The romantic lovers were more inclined to have experienced love as an intense, dramatic, overwhelming experience, and

were more likely to have felt that falling in love "just happened" to them or happened as a result of some inexplicable or "magical" force.

Communication patterns emerging from these respondents were varied. Many simply told story after story about meeting, being with, and doing things with the beloved. Others spoke in more abstract terms, and identified their love experience in terms of constructs, such as truth or commitment. Still others spoke of the very personal, individual experiences they had, such as letting go of control, being willing to depend emotionally on the beloved, or making the decision to risk. Some found it difficult to speak in "I" terms, instead relying on more abstract or third-person terms. Nearly all respondents, at one time or another, used vivid, figurative language, analogies and metaphors. Some spoke of significant dreams which added meaning to the experience.

Some distinctive nonverbal behaviors were manifested by different lovers. Some giggled and laughed and blushed throughout the interview. Others spent drawn-out moments thinking of ways to describe the experience, held long pauses, looked out the window, and chose their words carefully.

Many lovers revealed their secret language, symbolic gestures or gifts, and rituals. Often lovers have secret words for each other, for outsiders, and for romantic or

sexual experiences. One gay male, Mike, revealed his and Joel's nicknames for each other -- "Binky" and "Zinker" or "Bink" and "Zink" for short. Mike said "I know things are good when he calls me 'Binky.'" A heterosexual couple, Patti and Paul, exchanged gifts, each something that had been bequeathed by an older family member, which had significance, as a way of pledging their troth in a very old-fashioned way. One romantic ritual was revealed by Lisa -- driving into the country, stopping by the river, opening the car doors and in their imaginations "letting the river flow in," much as she and Jamie felt swept away by their emotions. For some lovers, tender moments took on a ritualistic character, and would be repeated as an expression of love. Respondent Sue found a way to get her lover Jane to talk about the experience when she seemed reluctant to do so -- they told "stories," like bedtime stories, in the third person, about their relationship.

HOMOSEXUAL/HETEROSEXUAL DIFFERENCES

Similarities and differences between homosexual and heterosexual lovers did emerge. The researcher was curious about such differences, since little could be found in the literature to indicate whether sexual orientation made any difference in one's experience of falling in love. In fact, most definitions of romantic love, such as Zick Rubin's, specify heterosexual love. Wilmot (1987, p. 5) is one of very few relationship writers who include same-sex romantic

relationships as a matter of course. The Mendola Report was one of few studies which indicated that falling in love and committing to a life-long relationship was not exclusive to heterosexuals. Peplau (1981) found many similarities between homosexual and heterosexual couples, including the struggle between closeness and intimacy on the one hand, and independence and self-fulfillment on the other. This study supported Peplau's findings that both heterosexual and homosexual romantic couples seek both attachment and autonomy. Lovers in this study representing both sexual preferences expressed their belief in the importance of sexual exclusivity, whereas Peplau's study indicated that gay and lesbian lovers found sexual fidelity less important than did heterosexuals.

The major difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals uncovered in this study came from the category of "problems." Homosexual lovers were more likely to have difficulty getting support for the relationship from friends, family and society in general, thus making it a more fragile bond. No heterosexuals in this study discussed the lack of such support as problematic, not even Patti, in love with a married man.

Since most of the subjects came from the researcher's own network of friends, co-workers, and acquaintances, awareness of their past love histories and the development of their relationships during and past the study period was

common. Homosexuals as a group were less likely to have had a history of exclusive involvement with same-sex romantic relationships than were heterosexuals with cross-sex partners. That is, every homosexual interviewee reported earlier relationships with cross-sex partners. Only one respondent, interviewed as a heterosexual, reported earlier same-sex relationships. In fact, that woman had been a practicing, political lesbian who just happened to fall in love with a man this time around.

This phenomenon may be explained by our society's unwillingness to acknowledge the validity of homosexual attraction and love, and by the social sanctions against it. This seems especially true in the teen years, when individuals are practicing their romantic relationships, leading homosexuals to one or more cross-sex relationships, which usually fail. At the time of this writing, six of the seven heterosexuals in this study are still in committed relationships or married, the one exception being the woman who again is involved with other Lesbian women. On the other hand, of the seven homosexual lovers in the study, only two are still with their lovers, both considering themselves "married" to those partners. The homosexual relationships described in this study lasted from a few months to six years. It seems likely that there is an effect of the social sanctions against homosexual coupling that makes the bond more likely to dissolve or break.

MALE/FEMALE DIFFERENCES

Females, whatever their sexual preference, were inclined to be more descriptive, display more affect, and respond to questions in greater length and in more detail. Males, in general, answered the questions in more terse language, without expansion, even when probed. In terms of length of interview, a male heterosexual gave the shortest interview (thirty-five minutes) and a Lesbian respondent needed two two-hour sessions to complete the interview. Only one female heterosexual, Christine, gave rather short, to-the-point responses, and three males (one heterosexual, two gay) were quite expansive and talkative.

The major difference in language came about in discussing the "magical" part of their love. Men were less likely to use the word "magic," but more inclined to talk of the phenomenon as "chemistry" or "electricity." Women in this study did not use those more scientific terms, but were more inclined to use "magic" and similar words. Both men and women used the phrase "it just happened," another indication that the romantic lovers saw falling in love as an event somewhat outside their control.

IMPLICATIONS

A primary question the researcher pondered while studying the literature and interviewing subjects was whether or not people in this highly romantic, sensually heightened state called "falling in love" were dysfunctional, as many of the

psychologists and psychiatrists who write about love protest. Such writers as Peck, Branden, T. Rubin and others imply or state outright that the condition of being in love is unstable, unhealthy, and immature. The researcher wondered whether their bias, acquired over years of treating psychologically disturbed people with exaggerated romantic tendencies, may have affected their judgment about labeling all romantic lovers as "sick."

It seems to this researcher that Lee's typology successfully differentiates between styles of loving, making a case for erotic love as a healthy style or stage in a romantic relationship. As early as 1970, Kephart pointed out that Americans spend approximately ten years engaged in romantic love behaviors which are a normal manifestation of their personality development and thus are not dysfunctional (Kephart, 1970, p. 35).

The subjects in this study had reciprocal, apparently healthy love relationships, which varied only slightly in the degree and duration of the more limerant characteristics. In fact, the limerant condition, except for its obsessive, unreciprocated qualities, may be seen as a stage for some lovers, who then move on to a calmer, more commitment-oriented love relationship. In the literature by psychologists, as the ones named above, the move to peaceful, content commitment, based on love and friendship, is the prescription for a healthy relationship. However,

erotic lovers such as Lisa seemed to this researcher to be as committed as those in a calmer state. The simple fact that head-over-heels-in-love people continue their romantic, heart-beating-wildly behavior for years even, does not seem to this researcher to indicate they are disturbed, or less mature, but simply experiencing love differently from their calmer counterparts. The key lies in the reciprocity of love, being loved in return, equally. Those who love obsessively without their love being reciprocated to any degree, are the immature, limerant subjects for the psychologists to study.

Tennov uses the word "limerance" to describe an obsessive sort of romantic love, yet McWhirter & Mattison use it to describe the first stage of developing love relationships in gay males, the falling stage. The present study, designed to screen out the more practical, pragmatic, playful and friendship-based lovers, also confirms that head-over-heels romantic relationships can be healthy, that it may often be a stage of development in the relationship. Christine probably best typifies the practical lover, just coming out of the "madness and magic" stage, somewhat embarrassed about it.

It may be wise for theorists to develop a new term, or more clearly define limerance, in order to have a word that names this kind of love. This researcher finds, like McWhirter and Mattison, the need for another term to

describe the romantic, in-love stage. Those researchers co-opt Tennov's term "limerance" to mean the "magical" stage without the one-sided obsession. Obviously, we need to find words in our language to describe and define the different kinds of love, and this is one contribution the typologists seem to be heading toward. With the work of such researchers as Hendrick & Hendrick (1986), Sternberg & Grajek (1984), and Davis & Latty-Mann (1987), exploration of various typologies and assessment scales is progressing to confirm the overlapping characteristics of romantic love and add to the clarification in the language about different styles and stages of loving.

Several questions in the interview schedule were based on Wilmot & Baxter's (1984) cognitive schemata of relationship prototypes (see Appendix D). The subjects in this study, in comparing their love relationships with their own "intimate" or "best" friendships, described three of the same differences Wilmot and Baxter stated. They described the romantic relationships as (1) more mystical, "magical," or otherwise unexplainable; (2) more intimate and sexual; and (3) more likely to require additional effort. They confirmed that many constructs identified as elements of both kinds of relationships were held in common, such as trust, openness, and caring.

Many subjects answered those relationship-comparison questions easily, but were dissatisfied with their answers,

as if there were something unexplainable in words about the differences, yet they clearly knew in their minds that there were distinct differences. Future researchers could explore, through qualitative studies, the comparative meanings of romantic love and other relationships to the participants. Because lovers often have great difficulty finding the words to express themselves, further exploration of the limitations of language may be a useful field of study. Questionnaires, such as the screening tool developed for this study, could be created and tested. One of the ways the respondents "worked harder" at their love relationships was in communication. Further study is needed in this area to determine in what ways lovers spend more energy "communicating" with the beloved, to strengthen, enhance, or maintain the relationship. Some respondents in this study reported spending many hours talking, sharing, exploring past histories, creating the future, working out problems, reading the other's nonverbal cues -- any area of which might be fruitful for further research.

LIMITATIONS

Researchers seeking to learn more about relationships and the development of theory to explain them, may wish to examine both the strengths and the limitations of this method. The small subject base used in this study can be a limitation, and is faced by most qualitative or ethnographic studies. Fourteen subjects were sufficient, however, to

discover and confirm the basic characteristics of the romantic love state. Additionally, a qualitative study is often an excellent base from which to launch more specific research efforts. The researcher often depended upon her memory and familiarity with the data to summarize, provide examples and hypothesize. Computer analyses might yield results of a more varied and precise form. Yet the computer does not allow for intuition and common sense to influence the results, and that personal sensibility seems to this researcher to be a strength of the method chosen.

The researcher's major frustrations emerged during the categorizing process while shaping the results. The research questions were sufficiently broad that the huge volume of data was difficult to handle. Had the researcher been looking only at one or two constructs such as commitment or attraction, or even "butterflies" in the stomach, the task would have been far simpler. As it was, the research questions sought to confirm the dimensions and elements of romantic love, and the meanings of love and falling in love held by the respondents themselves. With an abundance of questions in the interview schedule, the information gained was also very broad and all-encompassing -- truly filled with rich detail and many layers of meaning. This proved both a blessing and a curse. There was no lack of appropriate quotes from the respondents themselves to address a construct or an element of love. On the other

hand, narrowing the field of categories to a set containing fewer than twenty (20) or thirty (30) was difficult.

Overarching categories were possible in many dimensions and directions, making a decision difficult, since all or at least several options seemed equally useful or valuable.

Brief, single contact with each subject yielded rich data, but there is no way to determine whether they accurately described their behaviors. Also, patterns of reporting from individual respondents were not tracked through any period of time and not related to the development of that particular relationship.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of this study, valuable information was gathered through the comprehensive approach of qualitative analysis. Respondents easily supplied constructs which described or defined part of what they meant when they said they were in love. They provided in rich, descriptive language images which helped to make the inexplicable explicit. They explored and labeled their feelings in detail, providing corroboration for many of the dimensions and elements of love found by other writers. They tried to focus on that part of the love experience which was magical to them. Although there was great diversity in responses, there were also many similar, even identical responses, as each subject tried to make meaning out of her or his experience. This coming in, under, over,

around and through the data in the recursive, qualitative process, provides us with a special method of discovery about an intense, real, romantic love experience -- data which one may be unable to tap in any other fashion.

Falling in love is the one illogical adventure, the one thing which we are tempted to think of as supernatural in our tried and reasonable world.

Robert Louis Stevenson

APPENDIX A:1

Original Screening Questionnaire

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions according to your experience and feelings of falling in love.

I. In questions 1 through 6 please circle the answer that most nearly describes your experience.

1. I am in love. . .

- 5 not at all
- 4 maybe, sort of
- 3 well, yes, I think so
- 2 yes, certainly
- 1 madly, totally

2. When I fell in love this time, it happened. . .

- 3 slowly and gradually over time
- 2 one day I just realized that I'd been in love for some time
- 1 instantly

3. My beloved and I spend time together. . .

- 3 seldom
- 2 as often as possible
- 1 if it isn't always, it isn't enough

4. I think about my beloved. . .

- 5 not much
- 4 sometimes
- 3 several times a day
- 2 many times a day
- 1 every moment of every day

5. Because I'm in love, the world is. . .

- 5 worse than before
- 4 pretty much the same as always
- 3 better than before
- 2 great!
- 1 the best of all possible places!

6. The state I'm in now is. . .

- 3 worse than before; I wish I'd never met her/him
- 2 pretty much the same as before I met him/her
- 1 wonderful, and unlike anything I've ever experienced

II. In the following questions, please check off as many as apply to your present situation.

7. Which of the following feelings or symptoms of love are you experiencing (or have recently experienced) in your present relationship?

- ☐ "butterflies" in the stomach
- ☐ feelings like an electric shock when I see or touch my beloved
- ☐ trembling
- ☐ nervousness or "the jitters"
- ☐ something like an ache or pain in the pit of my stomach
- ☐ a floating sensation
- ☐ euphoria, feeling on top of the world
- ☐ excited, aroused
- ☐ constantly going up and down between ecstasy and agony
- ☐ blissful
- ☐ finding it difficult to concentrate

8. Check off any and all of the conditions that your friends and family have noticed, told you about, or teased you about, since you've been in love.

- ☐ "your head's in the clouds"
- ☐ "you're always distracted, thinking about her/him"
- ☐ "you spend all your time with him/her, ignoring others"

- ___ "you're not being realistic"
- ___ "you seem so much happier lately"
- ___ "you seem different"
- ___ "you're not hungry, you must be in love"

APPENDIX A:2

Revised Screening Questionnaire after Pilot Interviews

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions according to your present experience and feelings of falling in love.

I. In questions 1 through 6 please circle the answer that most nearly describes your experience.

1. I am in love. . .

- 5 not at all
- 4 maybe, sort of
- 3 well, yes, I think so
- 2 yes, certainly
- 1 madly, totally

2. When I fell in love this time, it happened. . .

- 3 slowly and gradually over time
- 2 one day I just realized that I'd been in love for some time
- 1 instantly

3. My beloved and I spend time together. . .

- 3 seldom
- 2 as often as possible
- 1 if it isn't always, it isn't enough

4. I think about my beloved. . .

- 5 not much
- 4 sometimes
- 3 several times a day
- 2 many times a day
- 1 every moment of every day

5. Because I'm in love, the world is. . .

- 5 worse than before
- 4 pretty much the same as always
- 3 better than before
- 2 great!
- 1 the best of all possible places!

6. The state I'm in now is. . .

- 3 worse than before; I wish I'd never met her/him
- 2 pretty much the same as before I met him/her
- 1 wonderful, and unlike anything I've ever experienced

II. In the following questions, please check off as many as apply to your present situation.

7. Which of the following feelings or symptoms of love are you experiencing (or have recently experienced) in your present relationship?

- ☐ "butterflies" in the stomach
- ☐ something like an ache or pain in the pit of my stomach
- ☐ feelings like an electric shock when I see or touch my beloved
- ☐ electric shock feelings when s/he looks at or touches me
- ☐ trembling
- ☐ warm, expansive feeling in my heart
- ☐ an ache or pain in my heart
- ☐ pounding in my heart
- ☐ a floating sensation
- ☐ euphoria, feeling on top of the world
- ☐ blissful
- ☐ sense of calmness, peace, well-being
- ☐ excited, aroused
- ☐ constantly going up and down between ecstasy and agony
- ☐ finding it difficult to concentrate

8. Check off any and all the conditions that your friends and family have noticed, told you about, or teased you about, since you've been in love.

- ___ "your head's in the clouds"
- ___ "you're always distracted, thinking about her/him"
- ___ "you spend all your time with him/her, ignoring others"
- ___ "you're not being realistic"
- ___ "you see so much happier lately"
- ___ "you seem different"
- ___ "you're not hungry, you must be in love"
- ___ "your feet are not on the ground"
- ___ "you're bouncing off the walls"

APPENDIX B

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SUBJECT INTERVIEWS

After a subject fills out the Participant Questionnaire, s/he may be accepted for an intensive interview based on the following criteria:

Part I:

#1 answer must be 1 or 2

4 out of the 5 remaining questions must be answered thus:

#2: 1 or 2

#3: 1 or 2

#4: 1 or 2

#5: 1, 2, or 3

#6: 1 or 3

Part II:

#7: must check 5 or more

#8: must check 3 or more

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

TO THE SUBJECT:

Jacqueline Gibson, a graduate student in Interpersonal Communication, is conducting a research project for her Master's thesis on the subject of falling in love. The primary method of data collection is an intensive interview lasting one to two hours, with fourteen subjects.

As a subject, you will be asked to describe your experience of falling in love. The only risks and discomforts you maybe exposed to are the emotional ones associated with sharing intimate information with a stranger (the researcher). On the other hand, you may find the experience beneficial in being able to share those happy experiences with another person.

The researcher will benefit by gaining an opportunity to investigate an aspect of falling in love that has not been addressed in the current research literature.

Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms and modification of any identifying biographical information which might be used in the text of the thesis or any subsequent publication.

You the subject are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time. You have the right to ask any questions about the methods used or the outcomes of the interview procedures, after the interview.

CONSENT:

I hereby give my consent to be interviewed by Jacqueline Gibson or her fellow researcher for the purpose of her study on the experience of falling in love. This consent includes permission to audio tape the intensive interview. I understand that this tape will be erased after a transcription has been taken for purposes of the study.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained and my name will not be released to anyone. All statements I make will be assigned to a fictitious name. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and my participation in the project at any time.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction: I am working on a thesis research project on falling in love and would like you to answer a number of questions about your experience. I will use pseudonyms so that no person's responses can be identified. Your responses will be held strictly confidential.

Please choose pseudonyms for yourself and your beloved, and I will use those names in the transcriptions. You may use his or her real name during the interview.

At the end of the interview, you may feel free to ask me any questions about the research project and the questionnaire.

I. The Experience of Falling in Love

- 1) Describe your experience of falling in love.
- 2) Tell me how you first met.
- 3) When did you first know you were in love?
- 4) Did it happen slowly and gradually, or all at once? Describe it.
- 5) What were the specific events that led to your knowing you were in love?
- 6) When did the two of you first talk about being in love? Who talked about it first? What was said?
- 7) How do you talk about it now, if you do? What kinds of things are said? (probes: who usually talks about it more, who usually initiates, etc.)

II. The Feelings Associated with Falling in love.

- 8) How does it feel for you to be in love? (probe repeatedly for feelings)
- 9) How is your everyday life different now, if it is?
- 10) What kinds of feelings do you have when you're with your beloved or when you think about him/her?

- 11) How do the feelings you have about your beloved differ from the feelings you have about your closest friend?
- 12) How do your feelings about your beloved differ from those feelings you've had about other romantic relationships?
- 13) What part do sexual feelings and a desire for sexual intimacy play in your relationship?

III. Beliefs in Romanticism

- 14) Do you have any feelings about this love being the "one and only one" for you? Describe.
(probe: how will you know?)
- 15) In your experience or beliefs, does love just happen to someone, or can it be made to happen? Explain.
- 16) Do you believe in love at first sight? Did it happen to you in this relationship? in any previous relationship?
- 17) Do you consider yourself a romantic? Why or why not? What do you think it means to be a romantic?
- 18) What do you think is the difference between true love and infatuation or puppy love? How can you tell the difference?

IV. Prototypes

For this series of questions, I'd like you to think about the other romantic or love relationships you've had.

- 19) How many times would you say you've been in love?
- 20) How is this time different from any previous romantic relationship(s)?
- 21) How is this love different from a previous sexual relationship?
- 22) How is this love different from an intimate friendship?

V. Metaphors about Falling in Love

It's interesting, don't you think, that we talk about "falling" in love?

- 23) What does it mean to say "fall in love"?
- 24) What was like, for you, to fall in love?

VI. Communicating about the Relationship

- 25) How do the two of you talk about your relationship?
- 26) In what kinds of ways are you especially sensitive to your beloved's words, actions, or nonverbal cues?
Can you give me some examples?
- 27) How do you two talk about your future together?

VII. Wrapup

- 28) Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to tell me about your experience of falling or being in love?

Thank you for your cooperation and for participating in this study. You've been a great help, and I will get a copy of the results to you, probably next fall or winter.

How did you feel about answering those questions about your love experience?

APPENDIX E

EMERGENT CATEGORIES

First Set: (7/87)

- 1) special, unique
- 2) tension of polarities
- 3) firsts
- 4) holiness
- 5) safety, protection
- 6) labeling it love
- 7) sharing
- 8) fulfillment, wholeness
- 9) magic
- 10) chemistry
- 11) importance of all the senses
- 12) wonder
- 13) intensity

Second Set (8/87)

* indicates carryover from previous set

- 1) metaphors
- 2) sudden realization
- 3) just happened
- 4) it's scary!
- *5) special, unique
- *6) tension of polarities
- *7) firsts
- *8) holiness
- 9) security
- 10) depth, intensity
- 11) labeling, deciding
- *12) sharing
- *13) fulfillment, wholeness
- 14) emptiness
- 15) contentment
- *16) magic
- 17) trust
- *18) importance of all the senses
- 19) smell, taste
- 20) eye gaze
- 21) touch
- 22) selflessness
- 23) loss of self
- 24) games, rituals
- 25) importance of communication

Third Set (8/87)

This set consists of all 25 categories in Second Set, plus the following additions:

- 26) commitment
- 27) free to be me
- 28) reciprocity
- 29) need
- 30) personal themes

Fourth Set (August 1987)

This set contains all in the Third Set plus the following additions:

- 31) wanting to be with the beloved
- 32) happiness
- 33) gives life meaning
- 34) universality of love
- 35) problems unique to homosexuals in love

Fifth Set (9/7/87)

After formulating the previous set, I met with inductive judge Sheila Johanson who suggested ways to collapse the wealth of categories.

This set was structured around the development of larger sets and subsets, taken from the literature, so that the multitude of smaller categories developed previously could fit into some larger framework.

I. Dimensions of Love

- A. commitment
- B. contentment
- C. happiness
- D. free to be me
- E. depth, intensity
- F. security
- G. reciprocity

II. Elements of Love

- A. sudden realization
- B. wanting to be with the beloved
- C. special, unique
- D. holiness
- E. tension of polarities
- F. sharing
- G. fulfillment, wholeness
- H. magic

- I. sensory categories
- J. selflessness
- K. loss of self
- L. trust

III. Necessary Conditions for Falling in Love

- A. needs
- B. just happened
- C. labeling it love

Sixth Set (9/12/87)

This represents a slight modification of the previous structure. * indicates an unchanged category from the previous set.

I. Dimensions of Love

- *A. commitment
- *B. free to be me
- *C. depth, intensity
- *D. security
- *E. reciprocity

II. Elements of Love

- *A. sudden realization
- *B. special, unique
- *C. holiness
- *D. sharing
- *E. sensory factors
- *F. loss of self
- *G. selflessness

III. Necessary Conditions for Falling in Love

- *A. just happened
- *B. need
- C. gives life meaning
- D. magic
- *E. labeling

IV. Feelings

- A. happiness
- B. contentment
- C. trust
- D. tension of polarities
- E. wanting to be with the beloved
- F. fulfillment

Seventh Set (9/13/87)

Another version of the previous structure. * marks categories unchanged from the previous set.

I. Necessary Conditions for Falling in Love

- *A. just happened
- *B. need
- *C. magic
- *D. labeling, deciding

II. Dimensions of Love

- *A. security
- *B. commitment
- *C. free to be me
- D. intensity
- E. depth, breadth, levels of love
- *F. reciprocity
- G. true love endures
- H. idealization of the beloved

III. Elements of Love

- *A. sudden realization
- *B. special, unique
- *C. holiness
- *D. sharing
- E. wanting to be with the beloved
- F. senses, sensuality
- *G. selflessness
- H. it's scary
- I. importance of communication

IV. Feelings

- *A. happiness
- *B. contentment
- *C. trust
- D. fulfillment, wholeness
- *E. tension of polarities

V. Behaviors

- A. mutual eye gaze
- B. firsts
- C. games, rituals

Eighth Set (9/25/87)

Frustrated with the old structure, I discussed the categories with committee member Joyce Hocker. To come up with a new structure, I simply asked the question: How do they talk about it (with emphasis on the "how")? New ways of looking at the data emerged.

1. in feeling terms
2. giving the "account" of how it happened
3. using metaphors

4. symbols and tokens
5. physical factors
 - a. sensuality
 - b. closeness
 - c. physical sensations
6. with awe, wonder, sense of holiness
7. by trying to explain the unexplainable (magic, mystery)
8. describing behaviors, including behavioral changes
9. in relational language
 - a. commitment, sharing
 - b. reciprocity
10. comparison with other relationships
11. in aphorisms, definitions
12. with ambivalence
13. problems, obstacles to be overcome

Ninth Set (10/31/87)

- I. How they talk about love
 - A. labeling it love
 - B. remembering
 - C. ambivalence/paradox
 - D. socialized expectations
 - E. in feeling terms
 - F. giving the account
 - G. formula: how to make love happen/work
 - H. in poetic language
 - I. in symbols/tokens
 - J. future orientation
 - K. comparisons
 - L. aphorisms
 - M. definitions
 - N. metacommunication
 - O. with awe, wonder, reverence, holiness
- II. What they say
 - A. love at first sight
 - B. needs
 - C. acceptance
 - D. mystery
 - E. more than just sex
 - F. obsession
 - G. describing behaviors
 - 1) physical factors
 - 2) romantic actions
 - 3) games, rituals
 - 4) mutual eye gaze
 - 5) sex as connection
 - H. problems
 - I. overcoming difficulties
 - J. covenants

- K. idealization of the beloved
- L. uniqueness
- M. desire to share/importance of sharing

Tenth Set (11/87)

At this point, it became necessary to reduce the analysis set of data cards by pulling every fourth card, leaving an analysis set of 259 cards, then re-sorting.

* represents categories unchanged from the previous set.

- I. How they talk about love
 - A. metacommunication
 - *B. labeling/deciding
 - *C. ambivalence/paradox
 - *D. in feeling terms
 - *E. by giving the account
 - F. in poetic language
 - G. future orientation
 - *H. comparisons
 - I. definitions/aphorisms
- II. What they say about being in love
 - *A. needs
 - *B. more than just sex
 - C. physical factors
 - D. problems
 - *E. covenant/commitment
 - *F. idealization of the beloved
 - *G. mystery
 - *H. unique/special
 - I. sharing

Set Ten represents the researcher's final effort before turning the data cards over to the inductive judge.

Eleventh Set (12/87)

Following is the set developed by the second inductive judge, Sue Green:

1. Falling in love/ true love and romantic love
2. Attraction/infatuation/obsession/crush
3. What does being in love mean?
4. Friends & lovers/liking & loving
5. Sensual factors
6. Rituals/ things you do that are special
7. Commitment
8. What I want from my love partner
9. What I get from my love partner

10. How my partner has changed since meeting me/
relationship is different
11. Resistance to letting go
12. How one sees the relationship
13. Why be involved with love?
14. Dealing with problems
15. Changes while in the relationship
16. Feeling secure and protected
17. Talking/communicating
18. What's your lover like?
19. The story of how we got together
20. The future
21. The "structures" we can love in
22. Having a common history prior to involvement
23. How it feels to be involved in a relationship
24. Homosexual/Lesbian love relationships
25. Touching/nurturing
26. The experience of my sexualness
27. What sexualness has given the relationship

Twelfth Set (12/20/87)

This set is the result of collapsing Sets Ten and Eleven, which then went to the deductive judges.

1. love is . . .
2. friends and lovers/liking and loving
3. commitment and other covenants
4. problems
subset: problems unique to gays
5. importance of communication/metacommunication
6. feelings
7. uniqueness
8. the story/account
9. the future
10. physical factors
subsets:
 - a. touching
 - b. eye gaze
 - c. smell
 - d. sexuality

After each of the three deductive coders put responses into the above categories, the categories were further refined. Their reliability scores were 0.55, 0.66, and 0.74 on their first sortings. Each time, the researcher discussed the similarities and differences with the sorters, then collapsed or re-named categories. On the final pass, the third coder and the researcher found sufficient agreement (0.85) to accept these final categories.

Final Categories (1/2/88)

* represents carryovers from Set Twelve.

- *1. love is . . .
- 2. romance
- 3. attraction
- 4. comparisons
- *5. commitment
- *6. problems
- *7. communication
- *8. feelings
- 9. ambivalence
- 10. description of the self/lover
- 11. description of the beloved
- 12. description of the relationship
- *13. the future
- 14. physical factors
- 15. sexuality

APPENDIX F

SUBJECTS

Subjects of this study were fourteen men and women who considered themselves to be in love at the time of the interview.

1. Patti, divorced, recent graduate of master's program in guidance and counseling, small Montana city, age 32; beloved Paul, separated, counselor, age 42.

2. Emma, "married," pastor/minister of mainstream Protestant denomination in suburb of large West Coast city, age 29; beloved Donna, social worker, age 34.

3. Christine, engaged, graduate student/biochemist, recent Peace Corps volunteer, midwestern city, age 25; beloved George, wildlife biologist, age 25.

4. Marit, single, elementary school teacher, small western city, age 36; beloved Jeremy, teacher, presumed mid- to late thirties.

5. Sue, single, women's health care worker, small western city, age 29; beloved Jane, presumed early to mid-twenties.

6. Lisa, divorced, art gallery manager, small western city, age 28; beloved Jamie, artist, presumed late twenties or early thirties.

7. Rachel, engaged, university student, small western city, age 24; beloved Keith, student, age 22.

8. Mike, single, photographer, small western city, age 31; beloved Joel, student, age 26.

9. Chad, single, student, small western city, age 27; beloved Margie, age 22.

10. Joe, engaged, business/communication student, small western city, age 22; beloved Mary, student, age 24.

11. Dan, single, communication student, small western city, age 22; beloved Annie, student, divorced, age 34.

12. Blake, single, student/business owner, small western city, age 26; beloved Steve, age 31.

13. Calvin, single, student/writer, small western city, age

24; beloved Matt, artist/gallery manager, late twenties.

14. Ray, engaged, recent college graduate/science teacher, small western city, age 24; beloved Karin, personnel professional, age 24.

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